A silhouette of a man in a suit and a woman in a long dress with a patterned skirt, standing behind a horizontal banner. The man is on the left, holding the banner, and the woman is on the right, also holding it. The banner contains the title text.

*GROUPS AND COUPLES*

*FRANCES LESTER WARNER*



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## GROUPS AND COUPLES



# GROUPS AND COUPLES

BY

FRANCES LESTER WARNER

*Author of "Endicott and I," and, with Gertrude  
Warner, of "Life's Minor Collisions"*



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TO MY MOTHER-IN-LAW  
ALICE STAFFORD HERSEY  
WHO HAS AN EYE FOR GROUPS  
AND TO  
ANNIE LOUISE HERSEY  
WHO HAS AN EYE FOR COUPLES



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# GROUPS AND COUPLES



## GROUPS



SPRY old lady in a New England hill-town had been invited to visit cousins who lived some twenty miles away. On the day appointed she rose at two o'clock in the morning, and set out on foot along the starlit roads, arriving at her destination in good time for breakfast. Later in the day, some one asked her how she happened to choose that early hour for her long walk.

“Because,” said she crisply, “I didn’t want to be reined up and asked where I was going.”

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When we cast in our lot with groups, we run large risks of being occasionally reined up. A family, a department, an orchestra, a neighborhood, a college faculty, a committee, or a club will sometimes rein up its members and ask them where they are going. Membership in any one of these assemblies is an education in itself, but the fact remains that two o'clock in the morning on an empty road is the time for individual and sequestered enterprise.

In spite of this, the magnetic human race needs slight provocation to arrange itself in groups. Take three old row-boats and beach them high on the shore not far from the seaside post-office, and they will form the perfect gathering-place for a group that will camp there among the sandpipers when it is time



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for the mail. Waiting for the mail to be put out is a social vacation act. Each cottage sends down its most serviceable or public-spirited or mercurial souls. A convention of family errand-runners is always a distinguished lot. You may know them by the memoranda in their hands. The weathered dories dry-docked on the sunset beach are all the forum that they need for wise and confidential speech. The punctual trustees who perch and talk there are fully provided with the three social elements that have held together all the famous clubs and coteries of the world: a reason for coming, a point of view, and a place to sit.

Groups have their chosen geography in all lands, certain recognized gathering-places accepted as the natural meet-

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ing-ground of talking folk — in Italy a fountain, in India a stream, in old England a tavern yard, in the desert a palm-tree, in Syria a well, in society a tea. The friendly group talks most freely in its accustomed scene, whether the traditional setting chances to be a fire-side, a dinner-table, a cross-roads, an oasis, or the sunny side of a barn.

The man who, as a stranger, enters one of these groups for the first time, without a particle of personal misgiving or secret fear, has in him some of the traits of a great actor, or of a great scout. Edwin Booth and Forbes-Robertson, we know, could enter any stage, in any costume, at any point, and grace the scene, though given no hint beforehand whether the play going on was "The School for Scandal," "The

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Romancers," "Rip Van Winkle," or the Book of Job. And as to scouts, we know that Daniel Boone and Colonel Roosevelt would be equally intrepid at a powwow, or in the Valley of the Kings, or in a kraal. It would be something to be able to search the inmost souls of great actors and great pioneers, and inquire if there is any social situation that has power to freeze their blood.

Full of curiosity on this point, I asked that question of an actor who was also a suave and worldly gentleman in society, a regular Beau Brummel in the ball-room, and at dinner a very Chauncey Depew. He said yes, there was one group that he feared with a fear that he could never get over: a party of ladies grouped upon a porch, raised somewhat above him as he came up the

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drive on an errand to the house. He did not fear them, he said, if the verandah was on the level of the ground. But to be obliged to mount a flight of steps toward them, with all their eyes upon him and greetings to be performed, was the thing in life that he could not consider with any trace of calm.

It is upon this unreasoning sort of fear that the advertisements have been playing of late. One hardly picks up a paper without seeing a personal question confronting one with alarming memories. "Do you know the comfort," reads one circular that lies at hand, "of being always at ease, of being sure of yourself, calm, dignified, self-possessed? Do you wonder what people are thinking of you? Do you ever wish that you hadn't done a certain thing, or

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said a certain thing? Protect yourself against all the little embarrassments that waylay the person who does not know, who is not sure, who never thinks of the right word to say." These remarks usually lead up to an offer of books to read for fifteen minutes a day, or of compendia on good form, or of courses in Personality. The great vogue of such works is explained entirely by the fact that each mortal, who has felt what Emily Dickinson calls "zero at the bone" in the presence of strange groups, believes that he is in some degree uncivilized, unbalanced, and alone.

The one episode which completely dramatizes for me this state of social desperation happened to my brother Geoffrey in his student days. He had nearly missed the morning boat that

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plied between our summer colony and Boston, but making a record run for it he had dodged past the guards on the gangplank just in time. Spying some friends of ours on board, he deployed hastily around them and vanished up the stairs to catch his breath in peace. But as he rushed headlong up to safety and out through the narrow hatchway to the hurricane deck, he was fairly caught by a gay group of girls already there, girls just enough older than he to be out of his set, but well enough acquainted to claim him as their squire. Geoffrey, panting, but ever willing to oblige, bestirred himself nobly fetching chairs. He had seated all the girls but one, and for her he was bringing one of these old-time collapsible cane-seated steamer-chairs, elaborately subdivided

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and hinged at every joint. Just as Geoffrey with his ungainly burden reached the group, the foot-rest section of the chair unfolded itself with great suddenness, caught the hat of one of the girls on its waving feet, and plucked it neatly from her head. Horrified, Geoffrey staggered backward, the chair meanwhile unfolding another joint — and stepped squarely on the foot of another girl.

“Oh!” ejaculated Geoffrey, still clasping his *chaise-longue* tightly to his breast, “excuse me very much.”

Geoffrey told this grim story of himself that evening to convince us, his sisters, that it was of no use for him to try to be pleasing in a group. “Any fellow,” said he conclusively, “who knocks off the hat of one girl and steps on another and then says, *Excuse me very much*,

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isn't fit to enter society, much less *move* in it."

Embarrassed in a group, one feels unique. Never was another soul equally ill at ease. And so the advertising circulars play upon this, our lonely sense of the inept.

The preliminary shiver before strange groups, however, if one has it at all, is entirely independent of training, aristocracy, age, experience, native talent, or Christian nurture. It is far more primitive and central than all of these. Most people have it under control a good part of the time, but now and then it reverts and overwhelms us. At such times, the motto on our banner should always be, "Excuse me very much"; or, if our case is very acute, "Excuse me in advance."



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A somewhat flustered gentleman was once taking an intelligence test, the first question of which called for the definition of the word *jeopardy*. "Jeopardy," he wrote, "is the act of behaving like a leopard." At the time, this answer made quite a little stir. The local newspapers ran a contest to see who could draw the best picture of a leopard, and leopards came in with horns and spots and stripes and cloven hoofs. But for me, this happy word is the one accurate term to describe the person who finds himself uneasy in a group. He feels exactly like a leopard, a leopard in a parlor, in a china-shop — a leopard who, like Kipling's cat, would much prefer to walk in the Wild Wood by his wild lone.

Some time ago, I was confiding such

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trials to a veteran toastmaster, one who seemed the genial spirit of social ease and *savoir-faire*. “Last evening at a reception,” said I, “a lady asked me a casual question about the weather, and for the life of me I couldn’t remember whether it was hot or cold, until she had gone on and it was too late.”

“Oh, yes, I *know*,” exclaimed the white-haired dignitary. “Some one asks me about the weather quite suddenly at a tea, and my brain goes like a pin-wheel, and I think hastily to myself, ‘the weather — the weather — the weather? I know the Chief of the Weather Bureau in Washington quite well, but as to the weather . . .?’”

The great rapidity and jumpiness of small-talk is comparable to the game we played as children, called “Beast, Bird,

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or Fish.” The boy in the center of the circle cried out “Duck!” perhaps, and if he pointed at you, you had to classify ducks before he could count ten. It was the nervous haste that lent hazard to the game. No third-grader in his senses with time to think would ever call a duck a fish.

This about groups, then, many of us sometimes fear. We are not afraid of the people, not even of their congregate opinion. We are simply a trifle apprehensive lest we may not have our wits about us always in the current moment — lest we may be what Einstein would call a “retarded potential.” At a crisis we may not be quite all there. We have known ghostly moments when our real selves went away and left us like something forgotten and uncalled-for,

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a quaint, stiff object made of *papier-mâché*. We were present only in effigy. We were like marionettes without any wires or any one behind the scenes to speak our lines.

Curiously enough, we persons who have now and then felt this sense of social jeopardy are often the very ones who memorize groups most by heart, and who are capable of the most profound and sensitive satisfactions when we strike a glorious combination in which we suddenly find ourselves at home. Perhaps it is on the same principle as the fact that the lad who is most afraid of girls, falls, when the right one welcomes him, most utterly in love. Apprehension is a notable sharpener of the eyes. We are constantly in a state of mind to observe and appreciate most

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keenly. Nothing escapes us, and when the richest moments come, they are not wasted on us. This is what keeps us incorrigibly social under difficulties, the knowledge that the happiness of the perfect hour is well worth many intervals that are not so full of fire. Every now and then we find it, the warm sense of security, a flash of reality and congenial glow, perhaps not in this group, or this, or this, but somewhere surely, on the edges of some or in the hearts of others, we shall find ourselves at home. I do not mean that slight thing that society would call "arrived." One may arrive at other inns than home.

It would be hard to say just what it is that makes a thoroughbred Jeopard feel at home. If a mystified social Lion should ask the Jeopards to explain, I

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suppose we could best do it by examples, not by definition. The true Tea-Lion might not have time to listen, but we could all tell him of our favorite memories of perfect groups, each of them in some sense typical, since perfection always grows from some eternal root.

There was once, for instance, an evening camp-fire by a New England lake, and around it grouped our two Fly-Fishermen, our Coffee-Maker, our Fire-Warden, the Mosquito-Chaser, the Tired Newspaper-Man, and his great collie dog, looking like Ole Br'er Fox in the firelight, with his fine bushy tail. Red sparks going up into the sky without a chimney are a great symbol for unforced, inextinguishable talk.

And there was a formal afternoon tea

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in a great house west of the Alleghenies, with all the delicate stage-properties of hothouse flowers and ices and samovar, with be vies of gracious women drifting in and out, and a butler who looked like Uncle Remus in a dress-suit. That afternoon it was the Dowager, the Débutante, the Lady from Oregon and the Hostess who made the perfect group for me in a vanishing moment of eager talk at parting, when we went out to the garden door and saw the magnolias budding on the slope, and a cardinal bird cocking his crest at us from the top of a locust-tree. The fragile unrealities of formal tea-time were an emblem of the exquisite briefness of our glimpse into one another's thought.

Another time, it was midnight after a community play, when actors and

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scene-shifters and prompter and coach were gathering up scattered properties after every one else had gone. The hero sat on a piece of the jungle, putting the Lion's head into a box. The wife of Androcles balanced on a bit of the Arena, and Nero was packing wigs. A mutual enterprise well ended unites the spirits in a cordial fraternity of relief.

Or around the fireplace one Sunday evening, we found the best moment when a group of our friends were talking and a neighborly young ship's engineer dropped in to return a map. He stopped to tell us of a subordinate of his just now stranded without a job in Pittsburgh, that curious place for mariners ashore.

“He could get a job in a minute on one of the river steamers,” said the engineer.



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“Why doesn’t he?” some one asked.

“Because,” said the unquenchable seaman, picking up his cap and going to the door, “he says he doesn’t like to be associated with shallow-water people.”

The responsive chuckles that greeted the sudden philosophy of that remark were the beginning of a conversation that lasted late, until the great slow-burning back-log was almost gone, and heart-of-oak gave out its tall pure flame.

Finally there was a night last summer when a group of us had been up to see my grandmother, to whom we told all the gossip, each of us waiting for a crack in the conversation to add our herotale, knowing that she would enjoy everything and report nothing. It is quite a feat to attain such high honor and gay responsiveness at the age of

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eighty-three. As we started to go, she called me back and told me to stop in the garden and get our mother a half-opened bud that was on her favorite white-rose bush near the gate. I found it in the moonlight, the sweet cool thing — from the Queen to the Duchess, a white rose. And as I hurried after the sauntering figures of Geoffrey and Barbara and Phineas halfway down the drive, I knew that the ultimate perfection of group-life must embrace the generations.

Lakes and starlit bivouacs, society, enterprise, and the four walls of home! Our favorite groups may take shape like constellations, or scatter like fireflies in a garden, or circulate like goldfish in a bowl. But every so often, when three or more than three expressive people come

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within one another's range, a fine thing happens which we try to suggest by likening it to such remote parallels as electricity in a circuit, music in a perfect chord, magnet and iron filings, sunlight on opening flowers, high tide at sea. It is the memory and hope of such moments that makes even the most spry and independent of us glad that we need not take all of our journeys alone, unquestioned, at two o'clock in the morning, on an empty road.

## SUPERVISED SUICIDE



ONE hears sometimes of Myopia Clubs — Myopia Hunt Clubs, for instance. The name pleasantly suggests little troops of near-sighted cronies going about their sports together, secure in the equality of their handicaps. Similarly, I have for years wished to found a club for those who cannot learn to swim. The club ought to have for its name some word as sonorous and as popularly understood as Myopia; some good Greek root by which the Athenians described those who could not get about in the water. But I find that the Greek vocabulary for water-sports is entirely positive and successful. Doubtless all the Greeks

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could swim. The Anglo-Saxon tongue is equally disappointing. It offers the ancient word "swimman," but no term for those wights who were unable to float in the path of whales. And Latin is no better. Every one will recall from first-year composition that the sailor and Galba always swam. In one old grammar even the farmer swims: "*Agricola natat. Natatne agricola?*"

We seem to have no historical background, we non-natty folk. Yet, though our club is hard to name without circumlocution, its fellowship, as I imagine it, is delightful. All the members are gentle souls who know the technique of perfect failure: subdued and disciplined people out of whom every trace of conceit has been washed by the waves of many lakes and seas.

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I used to be eligible for high office in this club. I am eligible now, in a way, but in dubious standing, and with a difference. I very nearly disqualified myself last July.

I had not known that my husband and all his relatives were such swimmers when I inadvertently married into their clan and went to spend the summer at their beach. But to be on the safe side, I carefully left my bathing-suit locked up at home. For once, I was not going to learn to swim. If I thought of the bathing-hour at all, I saw myself as a graceful social adjunct, with a parasol which would cast a little patch of cool-colored shade for tired swimmers who cared to loaf beside me and dig tunnels in the sand.

“Of course you’ll have Phineas teach

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you to swim,” said his sister Veronica at breakfast.

“I’d love to,” said I, “but I’m sorry to say I left my suit at home.”

This excuse, I saw instantly, was poorly chosen. Bathing-suits sprang up around me like mushrooms. Phineas’s sisters offered all they had. Their husbands offered to act as trained assistants for the lessons. “The last girl we taught,” said one of the brothers-in-law, “won the hundred-yard back-stroke.”

“Well,” said I tersely, “I shall win the hundred-yard sink.”

Phineas and Veronica conferred. Then Phineas interviewed me.

“You say,” said he, “that you’ve *tried* to learn?”

“Every summer,” I told him, “since I was three.”

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“And you sink?” said he professionally.

“Like a pair of scissors,” said I.

“Let me see how long you can hold your breath,” said Phineas unexpectedly, taking out his watch.

This had been my one accomplishment at college; in gymnasium examinations I broke the record every time for blowing up the little device which measures the capacity of the lungs. So, sitting on a pile of bleaching seaweed, with Phineas’s watch twinkling in the bright sunlight beside me, I held my breath.

“Very good,” said Phineas. “Now just walk up and down at a fair rate of speed and see how long you can hold it while exercising.”

I obediently strode up and down the



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sand at a spanking pace, and held my breath again.

“All right,” said Phineas when I returned to him; “we’ll teach you first of all to swim under water. If you sink well, you’ll be good at going down to the bottom and picking up pennies.”

I suppose a Daughter of the Revolution should never be afraid. I tried to face my future with the Spirit of ’76. But the picture I had of myself coming up, like a little Filipino boy, with bright pennies between my shining teeth, did make my blood run cold. I consulted Veronica.

“If a person is absolutely desperate,” I began, “and really knows the strokes intellectually, couldn’t it be possible to dash in and go swimming off, just as an act of faith?”

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“Oh, try it,” begged Veronica, charmed. “When you are ready, just plunge in, put your arms out ahead of you like a prow, and there you’ll *be*.”

As I swathed up my hair in layers of rubber, I thought of all the aquatic miracles — of Leander and the Wise Men of Gotham, and of the axehead that swam. I waited until all my friends were well out beyond their depth before I staged my *coup*.

“Come on in,” called Phineas, waving a periscopic hand.

“No,” I shouted. “You and everybody else come ashore and stay ashore while I go in.”

Obediently they all swam in and drew themselves up dripping, like trained seals on the sand. I am ashamed to confess that at this point

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I offered a brief prayer. I hope that I shall be forgiven for troubling the Lord in this informal manner; the desperate are known to pray. Taking a long breath, I dashed in, thrusting my arms ahead, as instructed, like a prow.

Perhaps a little champagne should have been broken over me at the start. Something, at least, I lacked; certainly not faith. I knew that I was not swimming, but with that company watching, could I not simulate the act? If I made firm strokes with two hands and one foot, might I not urge myself along with the remaining foot on the ground, so as to look sufficiently expert? At least I would affect the manner. Languorously I laid my cheek against the waves and struck out with three limbs, hopping simultaneously along the pebbly bot-

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tom on one toe. I made amazing headway. As I took long, luxurious strokes and long, convulsive leaps, I thought of those early pterodactyls that are said to have had a long, oar-shaped extra limb which they used as a swimming-paddle at will.

My spectators rose up and waded in to observe me. The nearer they came, the more furiously I splashed along.

“What *is* that stroke?” I heard one ask. “It looks a little like the dog-paw to me.”

“Well,” said Phineas gravely, “it looks a little like the fox-trot to *me*.”

To be taught to swim under water day after day by a whole family, in whose eyes one would wish to appear always at one’s best, produces feelings that Mr. Pecksniff would call “Min-

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gled.” Politely I begged my new companions not to interrupt their sports for me. But whenever Phineas and I appeared ready for our dip, the entire diving, raft-racing, pole-climbing, Australian-crawling tribe left each man his specialty to attend my obsequies.

“Just take a long breath and put your head under,” directed Phineas, “and when you’re well under, let your feet float up and spread out your arms. That’s the Dead Man’s Float.”

“Show me,” gasped I, to gain time. Instantly the whole family dropped beneath the waves. Toward me floated five submerged corpses, face down.

“I have my opinion,” said one of the brothers-in-law, rolling over suddenly and coming to life, “of a man who gets

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married without teaching his fiancée to swim.”

At this cruel gibe Phineas and I looked at each other for a moment. Then I drew a long breath, and went under, and sat completely down among the pebbles at the bottom of the bay. Death, I reflected, would have its little compensations: there would be no more sea. Vindictively I resolved to stay under indefinitely, like a planted mine.

Much may be done for pride, but the love of life dies hard. I eventually came up. The cheering crowd approved me. “Now,” said one of them, “at least she is wet.”

Why they did not tire of me at this point I shall never understand. They only regretted that they could not have taken me in hand earlier. Phineas even

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considered if it might not be well to begin to teach his three-year-old nephew at once.

“I should think,” said the baby’s father, eyeing his kewpie son appraisingly, “that it might be possible to teach little Squawks to swim in deep water without letting him guess that there is any bottom to the sea.”

“Good idea,” mused the baby’s mother. “If he swims before he wades, he will think of the ocean simply as a swimming surface, and it won’t occur to him to put his feet down. I must get him a suit.”

“You could start him off the edge of a boat,” suggested Phineas, “with a little cube of cork tied under his chin to keep him from swallowing too much salt water at any one time.”

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I gazed at my new nephew, and my heart stood still for little Squawks. Then, remembering the line from which he sprang, I withdrew my pity. Probably, when dropped overboard, he would wriggle out of his swimming-suit and swimming-cube of cork, and go darting off unencumbered, like a little silver perch.

But for me, suicide was the only course. By this time I was only too happy to submerge. But it is one thing to say farewell to a kindly world and to go and be a brother to the insensible clam. It is another thing to lift up the feet and swim.

“You don’t have to lift ’em,” protested Phineas. “Just *let* your feet come up, and you’ll swim in spite of yourself.”



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I cannot yet say that I ever swam in spite of myself. But one afternoon at low tide I had an experience that taught me many things. I know now the sense in which an older generation spoke of “experiencing religion.” I experienced the sea.

It was the windless calm of a late summer day when time and tide stand still. The seaweed under water hardly stirred. We waded out far beyond the tethered dories to a place where there was a clear area of deep water over white sand and feathery weeds.

“Now,” said Phineas to his sister, “I’m going off a good distance and let her swim under water to me. She’s going to try to open her eyes under water. You stay near and save her if she begins to drown.”

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“How shall I know when she drowns?” inquired Veronica, advancing to position.

“Watch her expression,” said Phineas. “When she begins to look happy she’s drowning.”

As to drowning, I did not care. I wanted to swim far more than I wanted to live. I took a last look at the fair sky and the friendly boats at anchor, and then I dipped my head deep down into Buzzard’s Bay. The still soft ocean received me, and I felt for the first time the light lift of the sea. I felt my feet drift lazily while I made my first authentic swimming-stroke. And then I dared to open my eyes under water, face down.

There is an advantage in deferring certain elemental experiences for ma-

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ture years. Opening the eyes under water is one of these. One sees more if one waits. Suffused, unearthly lighting, wavering fronded things floating far down, the sense of wide, unfocused eyesight — one's vision takes on a larger, more suspended gaze. It is not so much what one sees; it is the novel sense of absolute sight that is astonishing. In air, one seems to look across space at definite objects, more or less removed. Under water one does not look across; one's sight has melted into its medium. The wide eye meets the water directly. One does not glance and blink and peer about. One simply stares *in* water, round-eyed, like a whale. The vocabulary of the lecture-room and the fairy-tale should blend to record it fairly.

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Five good strokes I made, and then Phineas scooped me up.

In the weeks that remained, I swam under water consistently. Guests at the beach considered me an expert performer, showing off. They looked on my submerged habit as a token of my proficiency, not my limitation. But I considered it honorable sooner or later to explain; whereupon the guests arrayed themselves with my already considerable consulting staff, and preached the gospel of fresh air. Another week, they said, and I would be swimming with my nose out.

Perhaps. When I think about it now on cozy winter evenings safe ashore, it seems as if I might. If we were only together again, all of us, on a summer morning with a full tide ready to turn

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and a land-breeze to flatten out the surface, could I not come up from my submarine practice and swim as I should? Mentally I thrust my head up through the little waves and glance about. In imagination I take calm, proficient breaths, and go slipping along the water like an eel. In imagination only. That is all. I need not yet resign from that exclusive little club of those who cannot swim. But my standing in that fraternity is irregular, and I may at any time be requested to give up my member's badge with its neat design of full-blown water-wings. For I have one memory that a true non-swimming mortal cannot share: the memory of moving swiftly forward, face downward, submerged, wide-eyed, and horizontal, through the sea.

## FAMILY LAWS AND BY-LAWS



METHODICAL father, who thought that his wife repeated too often her early-morning instructions to their three small sons, drew up a set of ten simple rules for getting ready for school, and tacked a typewritten copy on the nursery door. The day after posting this notice, the father found over his own mirror a large placard, on which in careful hand-lettering was printed a simple set of rules for him. The instructions were respectful but specific, and ended with this, the final statute of a high state of civilization: “*If Some One Takes away your Whish Broom, plese try to bare it mildly.*”

## FAMILY LAWS AND BY-LAWS

Family laws are very likely to concern themselves with Things that Some One takes away. This particular father and his boys were born law-givers, setting high value on codified statements and documentary records. But the typical family by-law is seldom so neatly reduced to writing. It is more often like the ranchmen's law against horse-stealing — an informal matter of common understanding, having very little to do with the Ten Commandments.

Offenses against the property-laws of a household have their degrees. The domestic desperado who will not touch a jewel will steal a suitcase; he who would not borrow a bank-note will make off with overshoes and tools. The more portable the tool, the lighter the scru-

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ples. You may legislate the automobile key to a particular hook, the library books to an especial shelf, scissors to a leash, rubbers and skates to a nook in the crannied wall, textbooks to a school-strap like Shackled Youth — but all this restrictive geography will not forestall an occasional desperate outcry, “Who’s taken my ——?” One strong-minded mother ruled that any one who wished to have her assistance in a hunting-party must open his request, not with the usual words, “Where did you put ——?” but with the self-abnegating phrase, “Did you notice where *I* put ——?” This humble formula saves many a wordy tilt in that well-tempered home. A mortal being can feel no fiercer triumph than when, accused of thieving, he unearths the



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mislaid article in some forgotten hiding-place of the accuser.

How should one phrase a by-law for all this? Antiquity ruled that he who hides can find. But that proverb does not hold water when tested by modern psychology. He who hides is usually the last to be able to find, because he lacks the visual memory. Roughly speaking, it seems to be the decision of the domestic courts that the owner of lost articles should do his own hunting up to the point of desperate emergency, when it becomes the duty of all those present to join in. Before initiating the search, however, all prudent souls first make inquiries of the Lady of the House, in case she may be able to direct them offhand. Her visual imagination is inordinately well trained. Expert

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mothers can map their homes, shading in accurately the regions rich in tools, wire, toy fire-engines, blocks, tennis and golf implements, roller skates, all grades of caps, and all books, from "Peter Rabbit" to "Queen Victoria."

In my own early days, my mother once announced that the next person who mislaid a library book should not for a long time draw out any more. My sister, at that time in the first stages of the Katy books, was much impressed.

She cast about for a suitable spot where her cherished book might properly be kept, a place that she would not be likely to forget. Next day she came down to breakfast wearing a folded paper hung around her neck with string. She was very secret about the meaning of this, but that night she

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showed me the memorandum in strictest confidence. Done in red crayon in large capitals it read,

“Lieberry Book

In the second cubard in the kitchen  
in the soss-dish.”

Some such definite and individual talisman as this should settle the whereabouts of each separate article, lost and found:

Property rights rank high in the human heart, but the rights of free speech rank higher. In a conversational home, it is a toss-up who is the worse offender, he who will not talk when we long to listen, or he who will not listen when we long to talk. The popular will discourages equally the clam on the one hand and the monopolist on the other.

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It is no slight thing to get and hold attention in a truly talk-loving tribe. The sons and daughters of a notable lecturer faced this problem daily. To win a hearing in their assembly, one had to be what the Scotch call "gleg at the up-tak." On a long ride in the country one afternoon, the youngest child was inspired to add a remark to the discussion that was going on. She began bravely, but some one else cut in ahead of her and nobody heard her opening words. She bided her time, started once more, and once more the tide of argument washed her down. Then she cleared her throat, coughed, sneezed horribly, then groaned aloud. Nobody paid her any attention at all. At last she spoke in her loudest voice and richest vernacular. "I want you all to understand," said

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she, "that it was *me* what was making them squawks."

Your true talker hates to squawk unheard. But in justice to him it must be allowed that he hates even more to miss a choice morsel of family history being recounted by somebody else. Watch him if the telephone rings and he chances to be the one who is wanted, and see him tear himself away with the agonized appeal, "Don't talk till I come back!" The first chance at a dish of gossip, once missed, is gone forever. The second serving is never quite the same.

Recognizing this fact, the most tireless and imperious group of talkers who ever gathered under one roof had a by-law that any really interesting bit of news must be "saved" until everybody

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could hear. The sons and daughters of that house always timed their vacation home-comings so as to pull into town on the six o'clock express, purely for the pleasure of meeting the entire group directly around the table — the unbroken audience in its most responsive, perfect mood. Single out-riders might meet them at the station — a red-cheeked little brother sprinting up the platform, or perhaps their father with the car. But it was understood that only small-talk should be indulged in until they reached the house. The bliss of arriving there was expressed by the eldest daughter on her first return from college, when she paused with her second glove half off to exclaim, “Oh, *isn't* it nice to have me home?” It was the top-most rapture of arrival — to have

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that expressive circle reduced for once to utter audience, that circle normally so unruly, that attention usually so precarious, for that heavenly supper-hour all ears.

The naturally reticent person leads a trying life in such a home. He looks upon the vivacity of his relatives with wonder mixed with shrinking. When he has had adventures, he makes no sign. Pumping, however skillfully done, only condenses him the more. Whatever the family learns about *him* must be culled from circumstantial evidence or from "Who's Who." Especially he cannot understand the pleasure of reporting scraps of conversation from the world outside. In a talkative clan, the accurate reporting of all criticisms, information, and complimentary remarks

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heard about town is exacted of all loyal fiends. There is a value in the verbatim report of messages, invitations, and inquiries about the sick. Much of the flavor is lost in indirect discourse. If a family is divided on this point, difficulties arise.

A certain exemplary business man, for instance, is entirely without this reporter's nose for news. He seldom tells anything, never repeats anything, and if he hints of conversations, he does it in general terms.

“Sewall was at the office to see me to-day,” he remarks with unwonted communicativeness to his wife across the table, “and he talked about your committee report.”

Here is material for a sensation. Sewall is a great man.



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“What did he say?” The family sits agog.

“Oh, nothing particular — he just talked.”

“But what did he *say*? Did you start the subject, or did he come in and begin out of a clear sky?”

“*I don't know how he began!* I don't even know what he said. He just thought it was good, and that ought to be enough.”

“What makes you think he thought it was good?”

“Because he said so.”

“But darling, you just said you didn't *know* what he said!”

At this point, the time is ripe for the great outraged Final Explosion of the non-verbal memory brought to bay. The victim of this legalized cross-

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examination can bear it just so long and then he asks some questions of his own. Does the family think he is a dictograph? Or a court stenographer? Or a broadcasting set? Can't they take an interesting compliment for what it is worth? Does anybody see now why he hesitates to tell *any* news? As for him, he is not one to fetch and carry.

He is usually not one, either, who likes to stand and wait while others fetch and carry. If he consents to escort his wife or sister to church or lecture, he stipulates beforehand that she shall not linger after the closing-time to talk to friends. In his opinion, the act of quitting an assembly should be wordless and instantaneous, done with that degree of suddenness that the Germans used to call "*plötzlich.*" After the bene-

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diction or the closing number of the programme, he takes his comrade by the elbow with a grip that looks affectionate and feels resolute, and he wheels her out into the aisle. If she by chance escapes him and vanishes for just a word with a friend she has espied, he makes his way gloomily to the door and stands there, a severely simple monument to Despair. You may see at least one man of this stamp waiting at the exit of every auditorium. His wife has broken away from his control and is darting conversationally here and there. If you are acquainted with him, he bows to you abstractedly as you go by, but meanwhile he keeps an hypnotic eye upon his volatile partner running wild.

“My dear,” remarked one such hus-

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band and father imploringly to his daughter who had just detached herself from a knot of young ladies and come to his side, "I wish that you would go down there and see if you can gradually *accumulate* your mother and your Aunt Sue."

This process of accumulating one's relatives is complicated by a factor that slows down nearly all family action as a group. Few persons are willing to endure the tedium of unmitigated waiting—the process of standing inert until another is ready to go. If Aunt Sue, taking leave of one group, observes that her sister is still talking to another, she improves the vacant moment by slipping across the aisle to give a message to a chatting friend. This act involves Aunt Sue for a fresh interval, as she is

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introduced to the new circle and joins their talk. Meanwhile her sister, finishing her conversation, glances about, sees that Aunt Sue is charmingly engaged, and in her turn, while waiting, opens a fresh conference with a fellow committee member, warranted good for an hour if not interrupted.

Meanwhile, the stony escort at the door of the vestibule watches this self-perpetuating process with glassy eyes, and, if possible, sends legates. He knows that it is useless for him to go himself to get his wife and sister; if he draws too near those groups, he too will have to talk. His only resort would be to go home without them, and the mystic tenets of the mediæval gentleman check him there.

This business of overlapped time-

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killing is not confined to exits. It also governs the meal-hour in some homes. The breakfast-gong rings. A prompt straggler drops into the breakfast room, perceives it to be empty, and goes to attend to other tasks while waiting. Then come the tardy ones, look in singly, observe that nobody is there, and decide that they may as well improve the time. So back they go to their industries, planning to wait until they hear the congregated family draw out chairs to sit down. This time-saving shuttling continues until some exasperated ally of the cook goes on a raid and rounds up the busy bees one by one, holding them captive until a quorum has arrived. The persons thus corralled are always perfectly righteous: were they not there at the stroke of the bell,

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punctually long ago, and was not the room empty when they came?

When Phineas and Veronica were children, they and their brother invented a ruling that insured promptness at all gatherings. Their decree was this: the last one into the room had to be what they called "The Little Legs." The Little Legs, an official of entirely definite but not enviable duties, got the title at a reading-club that these children held on Sunday afternoons. The first one into the tower-room where the club met could be the "Layer-Down," monopolizing the couch. The second one in could be the Reader. But the last one into the room, poor varlet, had to be the Little Legs. This meant that if the doorbell rang, the Layer-Down might say, "What Little

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Legs would like to run and let in Mother's caller?" At this patronizing query, the Little Legs must run. Or perhaps the Reader might say, "What Little Legs would like to trot downstairs and get me a glass of water?" Whereupon the Little Legs would trot. One can understand that it was no light risk they ran of being the last one in. Meals and reading-clubs and picnic trips were punctually attended in their home.

There are families in which certain members are perpetually Readers and Layers-Down, while others spend their lives in the office of Little Legs, fatalistically born to serve. But where the candidates are closely matched, different parties take their turn in power.

My own sister and I, in early childhood, each required imperiously to rule.



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Democracy was not for us. But we could hardly be autocrats without something to govern, and our younger brother was not the stuff of which good serfs are made. So we had to alternate. We were both willing to be on one day absolute slave if on the next we might be the ecstatic irresponsible tyrant in our turn. We called this game "The Gout." We knew nothing about Gout except the picture in our Mother Goose book illustrating the rhyme,

"Lazy Tom, with Jacket blue  
Stole his father's gouty shoe."

From the picture, we gathered that the Gout involved a bandaged foot and a crippled state. Therefore the one whose turn it was to have the gout sat in a great wing-chair, and had one foot cozily swaddled in dolls' quilts. Then

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the rapture began; anything that the disabled governor demanded, the nimble slave performed. We usually planned to have the gout when the playroom needed straightening up. We had learned some lovely words for this process from our mother's Irish maid. Two ways, she said, there were in County Donegal in Ireland of tidying a room. You might choose either, to *turn* it out, or to *twig* it out, according to the care it might be after needing at the time. When one of us had the gout, the playroom was always both turned out and twigged out from stem to stern, an affair involving brooms. In this work, the Dauphin of the Gout took no part except administrative, to see that the twigging was well done. It was not such a bad scheme. It assured perfect

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ease to fifty per cent of us, absolutely well-directed diligence to the other fifty per cent, and to the playroom a shining elegance that uncaptained endeavor can rarely bring about. In later life, I have often wished for a great gout-ridden sovereign who would sit and tell me exactly what to do.

The rigors of that game of Gout, indeed, represent to me the peak of beneficent domestic lawmaking — a sort of super-state where there is no compromise: where absolute equality is asserted by turns at absolute monarchy: where entire efficiency is insured by fair turns at utter slavery, perfectly obedient to a gouty but recognized Body of Law.

Ruminating impersonally upon family life, one would fancy that once

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safely within the household walls each group would abandon legalism. A non-domesticated philosopher who had never seen a home would certainly predict that, left to themselves, a little band of loving relatives would shake themselves free of property-rights, officers, and codes — those restrictive and artificial impertinences of a barnacled State. But watching a family of children, one doubts if these laws are as artificial as certain disquieted modern spirits would have us think.

One gracious mother of a communistic turn of mind attempted to bring up her three little sons to mutual enjoyment of perfect equality, perfect liberty, and a common store of simple possessions with no distinctions as to what belonged to whom. These small boys

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were never influenced by the presence of servants, or of other playmates; nobody had ever suggested division of spoils or the possessive ambition to them in any way. There was no incentive toward grasping, for there was plenty for all.

“How does it work?” asked their grandfather with interest one day.

“They are as bad as we used to be,” wailed the babies’ mother. “If I did as they want me to, I’d have to get an apothecary’s scales to divide everything fairly into threes.” She paused, reflectively. “But the worst yet is this,” she continued truthfully. “The other day the football team went yelling along the street, carrying the captain on their shoulders. And after they had gone by, Tony elected himself cap-

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tain of the punching-bag team, ordered the twins around, and invented this yell: 'Hurrah for Boston, hurrah for the team, hurrah for me!' ”

To a gentle idealistic mother, this kind of thing is matter for anxious concern. Is it the Anglo-Saxon imperialistic turn of mind, the unquenchable instinct of a conquering ancestral strain? Or is it more than Anglo-Saxon, this spontaneous upspringing of laws within laws, by-laws within by-laws, growing so gradually in every intimate family that nobody knows who legislated them into power? What is it that makes a family, which might be as unregulated as a party of chipmunks in a tree, build up this informal system of statutes and penal codes and Extraordinary Writs? The process is by no means imposed by

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modern parents: the children left entirely to themselves will work up a codex more inexorable than any mature mind would conceive. It is their first fling at the audacious experiment of group-existence.

This is what an only child misses — what an institutional child has never had — what a child sent early away to boarding-school has irrevocably lost. It is not too far-fetched or fanciful to claim that the value is almost impossible to replace — the value of the experience of being a part of a spontaneous, related, law-developing group. The fortunate child who has served his apprenticeship at Gout and Little Legs, and the vigorous give-and-take of brotherly public opinion, will later be able to preserve his identity of soul in

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the onrush of a larger group; and when Society casts about him its curious mesh-like laws, he will know how to place the experience in the larger human scale, and will manage to "bare it" as mildly as he can.



“GIVE ME A”



HE soloist one Saturday night with the Boston Symphony Orchestra was an opera singer who had been stirring up a little scandal in her own incomparable way. Her mind was evidently not running just then on the musical theme; a discerning critic afterwards described her as “a beautiful but temperamental diva in a sentimental crisis.” Whatever the crisis, there is no doubt that the goddess was singing off the key. A magnificent Carmen voice flattening an eighth of a tone on every note can shake the nerves of the noblest orchestra. The celebrated *Herr Doktor* who was conducting in those pre-

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war days stood it as long as he could, then stopped the violins with a rap, thrust his magic wand under his arm, and turned attentively to the singer. "Miss ——" said he, pronouncing her name with that paralyzing European courtliness of which he was master, "will you kindly give the orchestra your A?"

Among musicians and philosophers this deserves to go on record as the most suave and polished example of the Quip Quarrelsome. After that question, there could be nothing between Carmen and the Doctor except stilettoes and drawn knives.

The musician is known by his reverence for A. When a group of assorted violinists begin to tune together in an informal, unconduted way, you can

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detect the expert by the precision with which he screws his pegs. The more he listens for shades of sharps and flats as a robin listens for a worm, and the more he tries the harmonics, running with soft accurate notes up and down the strings, the more surely you can trust him to do the orchestra no harm. The novice, for a longer or shorter time in his apprenticeship, always opens his box hoping that his strings have stayed in tune; the melancholy expert assumes that they have not. Every virtuoso, from Ole Bull to the Fiddler of Dooney, has accepted once for all the imperfect elasticity of catgut, just as he accepts the various tension of his own elastic nerves. Some artists are slower than others in becoming reconciled; one such, also a singer, gave up the violin in

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disgust because tuning irked him so. He said it was like stopping to gargle before each song.

To the initiated, however, this preliminary gargling of an orchestra is a wholesome, cheery sound. The player long inured to ensemble can tune with Babel all around him, if only he can get the pianist to give him *A*. This is what pianists as a race despise to do. They may start the repetitious business faithfully enough, but their attention wanders and they ripple off into modulations or conversation or trills. At this point, some persistent violinist gets up, thrusts his bow over the pianist's shoulder, horse-hair-side up, and coldly strikes the *A* — a gentle hint. “Oh, keep *tunking* it,” implored our bass-viol one night when his wife at the piano had

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given us one perfunctory A and left us to make the best of that. "Keep on till we tell you to stop." This should be the motto of every accompanist who aspires to please. He should be willing to tunk and tunk.

We in a modern orchestra tune to the piano because the piano cannot tune to us. But in those independent days when there were six strings to each viol and no piano at all, the rules for adjusting the strings were different, as we learn from one Henry Purcell, "musick-seller" to the "quires" of the sixteen hundreds. "Firft," he observes to the student of the treble viol, "you muft wind up your Treble or smalleft String as high as conveniently it will bear without breaking. This treble is called D lasolre; then Tune your fecond five

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Notes lower, and it is Alamire; the Third four Notes lower is Elami; the Fourth three Notes or a flat Third lower is C faut; the Fifth four Notes lower is Gamut; and the Sixth four Notes lower is Double D folre. This being exactly done you will find your Viol in tune according to the Gamut." After this tuning, Purcell describes the chief "stroaks" forgotten by the treble viol of to-day, how to play Graces and Flourishes, plain Shakes, Backfalls, a Shaked Beat, an Elevation, a Springer, a Double Backfall, and Double Relifhes, in both Cliffs, Bass and Tenor. Out of all this ghostly technique, only one requirement has remained the same for viols from that day to this; the requirement that everything shall be "exactly done."

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To find ourselves in tune with past centuries is always an inspiring thing. We of the modern amateur orchestra may not wind up our pegs according to the Gamut, but at least our strings hum responsively to the accounts of the experimental orchestras of former days. When Henry VIII, in his cash-books, gives us the roll-call of his band, consisting at one time of "fifteen trumpeters, three lewters, three rebeke, three taberets, one harper, two vyalls, four drumslades, a phipher, and ten sagbuts," we take on fresh courage to combine such instruments as we may be able to assemble from a constantly fluctuating supply. If our amateur membership is uncertain, so was the ensemble of the King. Numbering at one time six Italians — Vincent, Alex,

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Albertius, Ambroso, John Maria, and Antony — it later dwindled to fiddlers three, Hans Highbourne, Hans Hosset, and Thomas Highbourne, with now and then the assistance of Jakkis Collumbell, and John Severnake and John Pyrot, forty shillings monthly wages each, and Thomas Evans, far less expensive, at six shillings sixpence the month.

There is a Thomas Evans in every band. In old days he played the rebec or the “fithul.” Now he plays second violin. For many years this Evans has been my patron saint, ever since one afternoon in high-school days when one of the boys in the orchestra held up proceedings by insisting that he had to play first violin. This meant that I played second. When the music-



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supervisor pressed him for a reason, he said that his violin was a first violin and you couldn't play second on it.

My own, I may as well confess, has from that day been always a second violin. I advertise to play one and to prefer it. This is no humble Heep-like taste, though it has brought me many a chance to play with my betters. With more proficient players always at hand, my preference is natural; but my real reasons for preferring second are not retiring or comparative at all. The gayest musical adventures, I think, fall in the way of that abandoned creature who is willing to play either second fiddle or viola, at need. The professional cannot afford to do this; the viola with its stout neck and giant spacings has a tendency to upset the

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hand. But the permanent amateur with nothing to lose cannot do better than to strike this useful combination. As viola, he tastes the bliss of singing tenor and rumbling down to C, and he makes possible a stringed quartette. As second violin, he is eligible as a minor character in a variety of troupes.

Second violins and minor characters view the world with sharpened eyes. We have to, if we are to perform our supplementary parts. We must support the theme without announcing it; we must fill in the chord without surmounting it; we must be, as Purcell aptly says, "a most excellent Inward Part." Trained, *ex officio*, to follow well, we have to watch our leaders; and watching, we observe. Thomas Evans had only six shillings sixpence to his

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wage, but if he played second v'ell he had the satisfaction of seeing life.

The most lively scenes that I have viewed above my fiddle's bridge chance to be the scenes in which I requested the most peculiar instruments to "give me A." A change from piano accompaniment is always a revelation in pure tone, but the scenes I have in mind were revelations also in other ways: the first in picturesqueness, the second in moonlit adventure with a viola and a dog, the third in simple volume of tone. In the first I tuned my A to a melodeon, in the second to a B<sup>b</sup> clarinet, in the third to a dulcimer — improbable, I know, but true.

A retired rosewood melodeon stored under low rafters in a garret gives out a most individual and charming A. There

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was such a melodeon in our attic in my childhood. The fascination of this instrument over the piano downstairs was the fact that the piano was in good order and the melodeon was not. My sister and I had ourselves dragged it out from under the eaves and put it in repair, and we took a kind of romantic pride in inviting a few select cronies who also were "taking lessons" — an eighth-grade boy and girl and a wonderful ninth-grade boy — to join us with their violins. Barbara and I took turns playing the melodeon; when I played it, she played the 'cello; when she played it, I played second violin. We could trust nobody else with the melodeon, because our repairs on it had been such that it had to be played by one possessed of an exact knowledge of what we

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had done to its works. The pedals of a melodeon, as people who have repaired one know, are connected to the accordion-like roof of the bellows by slim rods, loosely balanced and delicately hinged in place. The entire pumping-system of ours had come apart, and we had patched it up with string and adhesive plaster and picture-wire and needle and thread. Like all once shattered systems, it had weak spots, and, if you stepped upon the pedals without discretion, they fell out. The only time we ever yielded to the entreaties of a piano-playing friend and let her come up to accompany us, the pedal-rods fell out so persistently that I, with the combined politeness of hostess and second violin, offered to sit beneath the melodeon's spreading frame, and hold

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the pedals in. Crouched on the attic floor, with the leathern bellows heaving above me, and the slim rods of the pedals in my hands, I was allowed to sing. It is recorded that an early viol-player in the court of Charles IX made for himself a huge viol large enough so that a young page could sit inside and sing; the owner of this viol played the bass and sang the tenor, while the little page inside the viol sang the air. If the attic-haunting ghost of Charles IX had listened to our melodeon that afternoon, he certainly would have thought there was a page inside. As I sang, I peered out through the lyre-shaped support of the pedals, and watched the playing group outside: Barbara, in her blue sailor-suit, sitting on the edge of the old rep sofa, her 'cello firmly planted

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with its end-pin in a crack; the ninth-grade boy, our hero, his music balanced in the seat of the baby's discarded high-chair, himself perched on an abandoned steamer-trunk; the other players ranged in the light of the dusty west window under the eaves, their bows glimmering in the late sunshine, their music poised upon the sill.

Our garret ensemble always played hymns, mainly because we had enough hymn-books to go around. My part in these, when I played second violin, consisted mainly of long full tones, *sostenuto*, *ritardando non troppo*, a singing contralto with no elements of worry or surprise. There was leisure to enjoy the quiet blend of tone. The low wooden roof of the garret acted like a weathered sounding-board; the tones of the melo-

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deon were soft, like wood-winds playing the four parts, an old-fashioned faded effect of sound. It was our first experience in actually hearing the building-up of chords — chords produced by our own fiddle-strings, unhurried, with time to listen as we played. I suppose that the first elemental thrill of ensemble, after enforced practice of beginners' books and scales, is never quite duplicated in after years. That good fellowship has long since dispersed, and the melodeon is now a spinet-desk. But I shall never hear the grave harmonies of "Lisbon" and "Duke Street" and "Siloam" without the memory of dim lighting in the attic after school, when we filled the shadowy rafters with our psalms.

The melodeon is a peaceful memory,



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reassuring and sustained. But when one tunes a viola to the caprice of a clarinet, out-of-doors on a June evening, by moonlight, one ventures much. A clarinet is cranky when it is cold. To warm it up, you have to play it for some time, whereupon it changes its pitch.

To suit the clarinet, we had to keep shifting the strings a trifle as its temperature rose. This was on the occasion when our college orchestra furnished the incidental music for the Commencement performance of "Midsummer Night's Dream," in the grove on the campus hill. All the parts were taken by senior girls, and we musicians were costumed in keeping with the Elizabethan cast, all in slashed doublets and hose, with dashing shoes turned up

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sleigh-fashion at the toes. College boys taking women's parts are simply funny; but college girls in the rôle of Shakespearean men take on a surprising touch of the unreal and the fantastic, like a decoration by Puvis de Chavannes. The disguise, the moonlight, the old music under the pine trees, had us half enchanted by the end of Act IV. Everything was going well, the audience in perfect fairy-story mood. Between the acts, the clarinet and I were waiting in the underbrush near the tree where Moon's dog was tied awaiting his cue. The stage-manager, we knew, had scoured the country for that dog. All the village pets were too modern-looking and too well-known on the campus for the part. But this animal was what an expert in old manuscripts would have

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called "an Early Dog." He looked every inch antique, with gaunt frame, drooping hound-like ears, mournful chops, sunken eyes; he might, like Cy-rano, have fallen from the moon. As the clarinet and I exchanged a tentative A, we heard Moon's dog give one minor howl in perfect tune, and saw him stealthily slip his head from his archaic hempen rope-collar, and escape like a phantom down the hill. Thrusting our instruments aside, we darted after him down the cinder-path, shouting the alarm as we ran. The only one who heard us was the noble Egeus, father to Hermia. She had finished her part in the play, and ran promptly to our assistance. Down the hill we flew, Egeus, garbed like a Greek parent, fluttering far behind. The clarinet was

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running just ahead of me, and even in the nightmare anxiety of the moment I had time to notice that she looked like the silhouette of the escaping Knave of Hearts. The Elizabethan doublet and hose is the most limber costume in the world. Never in real life could we have run so fast. But Moon's dog ran faster. Once in the village he eluded us completely. Any dog would have to do. We had never observed how scarce dogs are at night. Not one was stirring. And then, perched on the steps of his verandah, we saw Hiram, the celebrated bull-terrier which belonged to the Professor of Biblical Literature.

Even in our straits, we hesitated as to Hiram. But the Moon must have his dog. The clarinet guarded the exit to the porch, while I, with the ardent dog-

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lover's manner of obsequious cordiality, strode up the steps, and without warning snatched the astonished Hiram about his waist. Whoever has abducted a bull-dog will remember the inflexible, hoop-like shape of its ribs, perfectly hard and circular, encased in a loose coating of soft skin. Hiram was a perfect replica of the Yale bull-dog, somewhat reduced, with a screw tail. With all his four feet and head he struggled, yelping his protest, while I exhausted love's sweet vocabulary to calm him, and held him in a bull-dog grip. Breathless we deposited him on the hill, tied him neatly to the Moon's dog's tree, left Egeus to guard him, and snatched up our instruments again. As we darted through the shrubbery, the clarinet breathed a well-chilled *A* in my ear,

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and we slipped into our places just in time to join the soft music of the Palace of Theseus, which ushered in Act V. The lovely lines began — “the lunatic, the lover, and the poet are of imagination all compact” — but the clarinet and I kept a guilty eye upon the wings, much as a rich patron might watch for the entrance of a protégé. At last came Moon’s cue, and we beheld our Hiram entering, seated, the Moon pulling him by his rope as one draws a sled over a patch of uneven ground. The frivolous undergraduate audience collapsed, recovered itself, and went wild again. Hiram rolled them an evil glance, showing the whites of his eyes, while Moon intoned faithfully, “All I have to say is, to tell you, that the lanthorn is the moon; I the man i’ the

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moon; this thorn-bush, my thorn-bush; and this dog, my dog.”

I have always thought that it was a triumph for William Shakespeare that his play ever recovered from Hiram. In proof that it did, I offer one small fact. When I think of the clarinet, I see her, not as the leaping, desperate Knave of Hearts skimming along the cinder-path downhill, but as she looked when we played the eerie music for the final dance of Titania's elves. Blowing the clarinet's own characteristic airy reed, she poised half kneeling forward to watch the dancing, like a mythological piper among the leaves. And when I remember my viola, I think of it not as I cast it from me beneath the Moon's dog's tree, but as its tenor voice grew softer and softer in the last lingering

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chords when the elf put out the fire. The viola should be played by moonlight, singing Elizabethan elves to sleep.

These experiments with melodeon and Shakespearean clarinet might possibly be admitted by courtesy to the legitimate orchestra circle. But our family experiments with the dulcimer could not. We indulged our inventive powers in this way only when supported by all our relatives and relatives-in-law, at times of family reunion, on Thanksgiving afternoon. Traditionally, when the tribes had gathered, we liked to play at least one selection in which every one could have a part. Haydn's "Toy Symphony" fulfilled this need. But before playing it, we had a special curtain-raiser composed by one of the uncles for the toy-dulcimer accompanied by



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strings, with an obbligato on thin glasses of water played by the smallest children with silver spoons. Each child presided over one glass. It occupied the after-dinner efforts of our best talent to fill and tune those glasses, and to rehearse in the kitchen before offering our selection to the older set. The effect was delicate, if a trifle weird. Glasses of water, like the bells in "Parsifal," are not the easiest instruments to match in tone. A tumbler beat upon by a silver spoon has a bell-like double note, the "tap-note" and the "hum-note" combined. Which should we listen for in tuning, the tap or the hum? This controversy was settled once for all by our uncle; we must tune to the tap and let the hum act as a variant harmonic overtone. This we did, rehearsing

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softly in the kitchen, trying the familiar tune of "Go tell Aunt Rhody" first, to accustom the youngest children to following our conductor's stick. As Stransky is to the Percussion, so was our uncle to a child with a silver spoon. When he pointed his baton at you, you gave your glass of water one perfect silver blow. You had no music to read — you were too little to read. You simply watched the stick, with an attentiveness that Theodore Thomas would have been gratified to command.

The strings had manuscript music, saved from year to year. Our selection was named "The Sleighbell Chorus," and it began with far-off tinkling of bells and singing of sleighing-parties, continued with a wintry little tune accompanied by the dulcimer, and ended

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with a glorious jargon of sweet bells — musical glasses all together, strings *pizzicato*, dulcimer *arpeggio* — *stretto*, *tutti*, *con brio*.

We took the liberty of adding our chime of sleigh-bell glasses to the toys called for in Haydn's Kinder Symphony, even though it took an expert conductor to work them in. The older boys, led by another uncle, played the whistles; the aunts played the rattles; our father played the triangle; and our grandmother was the only one who could be trusted with the nightingale, a toy bird filled with water that made a marvelous warbling sound when she sang into it — a bird far too tempting to be put into the hands of anybody less mature. Such relatives-by-marriage as remained played Kazoos, instruments

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of the trumpet class through which one sang, on the principle of singing through a comb. And if any one was left who did not sing, he played the drum. Our grandfather was our only audience, over by the fireplace with the youngest grandchild on his knee.

You cannot describe the “Kinder Symphony” without making it sound like pandemonium, but indeed it was the soul of disciplined order, as Joseph Haydn, that good Papa, intended it should be. The strings kept the merry little rippling theme running evenly along; our mother at the piano was a model of steadying *tempo*; our uncle as conductor had become expert with the familiar score — and the Toys followed sedulously his imperious active stick. At those *appassionato* crises where the

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rattles and whistles and nightingale come in together, still there was no riot; it was far too serious business to keep your place and rattle your allotted measures and no more. Even the performers on the tumblers of water were perfectly composed, tuned now to the piano as well as bells can tune. One of the annual charms of our bell-ringing section was the fact that every year or so one of these small bandsmen could be promoted to the strings. For musical aspirants there was always hope ahead.

Every ensemble has its day. All of those little glass-players have been promoted now, and that gay orchestra with its perfect audience of one can never completely be assembled anywhere again. But I think that any family or group that has ever tuned its instru-

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ments together will always possess certain overtones of remembrance, like the hum-notes of a bell — certain recollections of genial moments when everybody came out together on one accurate final chord. It does not greatly matter what the harmony was, Brahms or “Duke Street,” the “Sleighbell Chorus” or the antique music of Thomas Evans and Hans Highbourne and Jakkis Collumbell. Minor characters we may be, with our frail clarinets and nightingales and strings. But if we have once played our part with other viols exactly tuned, we have a comfortable memory that we like to keep forever and forever, a memory of pleasant chords and friendly vanished groups, whether it was a piano, a melodeon, or a dulcimer that gave us *A*.

## FIRE IN THE EYE



MY wife came running," wrote the man who had been attacked by a colony of bees; "my wife came running, spurred on by that combination of sympathy and curiosity known as Wifely Love."

The sentiment of curiosity lends a dash of spice to household love. In the home-circle, this curiosity is not a purely inquisitive desire for information. Knowledge, in itself, is a mild pleasure, but it seldom satisfies. We like to keep an eye on our relatives, that we may surround them with the tender grace of our sympathies, and also that we may see if we approve their plans.

Acts in a household, therefore, are

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frequently very much like the acts in a rehearsal of an amateur play: the acting and the lines may be interrupted from time to time by the shouts of prompters, coaches, and property-men, and by the hoarse whispers of one actor telling another actor what to say.

The three phases of activity most freely supervised in this fashion are matters of procedure, matters of costume, and matters of the Legal Code.

One might suppose that personal liberty in matters of procedure would, after a few experimental years, be assured in every home. But in the average household any unusual and unexplained act is the signal for a general questionnaire. This is inconvenient for one who suddenly finds himself with something to conceal.



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A university oarsman, at home on his vacation, one afternoon took a girl canoeing and upset her in the lake. He ladled her skillfully back into the canoe, climbed in, seated himself, and tipped over again on the other side. Together he and the girl swam ashore, towing the canoe. Neither objected to a wetting, but both objected to having their mishap known among their friends. They hurried dripping along obscure byways, and arrived at her house unobserved. Taking leave of his lady there, the hero sped home, and entered his room by a convenient trellis whose services he had shared for years with the vine of a Dorothy Perkins rose.

Once in his room, his only problem was how he should dry his costume unnoticed by a large and inquisitive band

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of sisters. He thought of the tailor. But in a small town a tailor is not only a tailor: he, too, has friends. The sun was still high, the weather hot. A hidden, yet sunny, area where he might spread the white flannels was all he asked. Resourcefully, he remembered the top of the mansard roof where, in high-school days, his wireless aerial used to wave. Up through the attic, up his old rope-ladder, out through the dusty skylight he went, with his soaking bundle and a ball of twine. The twine he stretched skillfully hither and yon, from one to another of the three chimneys, making a flat low network, much as one arranges horizontal strings for a garden of cucumbers. Then he sat down in the shade of a chimney to wait, planning to turn the garments from time to time as

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they dried. An hour passed. The sun was warm. A lazy breeze drifted obligingly over the roof. The little affair, he thought, had come off surprisingly well, considering.

At this point in his reflections, he was hailed by his younger sister Claudia, from the lawn below.

“Herbert,” she called, “what are you doing on the roof?”

Herbert went politely to the edge and gazed down. “I was thinking,” said he, “of planting a Moorish roof-garden.”

“And what,” pursued his sister, “are you doing with that twine?”

“Mending my nets,” said Herbert.

“I’ll come up and help,” she volunteered.

“Oh, no, you won’t,” said Herbert

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affably. "I pulled the ladder up after me."

Claudia was not abashed. "Mrs. Lane has been calling on mother," she went on, "and she said you were spreading out something all over the roof. She said it looked like a small wash."

"She did, did she?" said Herbert admiringly. "Einstein must be right. I thought you couldn't see the flat of this roof from the street."

"You can't," said Claudia. "She was calling on the Farleys on Oak Hill, and they looked down from their sun-porch and saw you. Now what are you doing, Herb? Mother wants to know."

"You just tell mother," said Herbert with finality, "that I'll tell *her* if she won't tell *you*. Tell her I'm coming right along down."

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To live happily in a sympathetic family of this kind, you should do always, as Jonathan Edwards advised, only those things that you could wish to be found doing if your time should come to die.

Occasionally, however, the fiery moment in the domestic drama arrives, not when our relatives are unduly curious, but when they choose the wrong moment to demand from us the sympathy that is their due. Every strong executive, who goes straight to his goal with his Eye on the Object, exerts a powerful pressure upon his relatives to make them his retainers. If his relatives are themselves natural leaders, they resist this pressure with much the same vigor that animated the non-coöperative movement under Ma-

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hatma Gandhi. Each in his own sphere remains intent, with projects that fill the mind's horizon and absorb the nervous system. Several members of the same family, going about the house in this purposeful mood, will sooner or later work up a dramatic climax.

In families of artists, this conflict between Great Moments and executive plans may become a serious thing. In most musical households there is at least one member who, the instant a bit of music is well under way, is inspired with a burst of irrelevant activity. Hostesses are great offenders in this line. Having asked the artists to perform, they glide about inconspicuously while the music is going on, opening and shutting windows, adjusting and distributing sofa-cushions, inquiring in

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whispers whether the light is right for the accompanist, and, in general, making ready for the end of the world. They think that, if they tiptoe and whisper, their little avocations will be practically unobserved.

One musical clan has felt so bitter about this criminal practice, that they have trained all their friends and all their relatives-in-law to go into a sort of trance-like state whenever any sort of music begins. Even the grandchildren are so trained. On Thanksgiving Day, all the generations had gathered for an afternoon of song. One of the uncles was in full swing in the most telling passage of a tenor solo, and everybody was giving him the tribute of what Mr. Schauffler calls "creative listening," when a little mouse came sud-

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denly from under the piano, darted across the room, and ran under the chair of the smallest niece. Every one was breathless, expecting screams. But the well-instructed child sat motionless, wide eyes fixed upon the soloist, until the last note of the song had died away. Then she took her little rocker on her back, as children do, made her stooping way across the room, settled her chair beside her mother, and remarked confidentially, "I just saw a little 'quirrel, mother, and I thought I'd come and sit by you."

This extreme of perfection is rarely attained, even in the most artistic homes. The most carefully disciplined of relatives will occasionally ask a question of a violinist in action. When a player is at the height of a difficult



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theme, attention absorbed, tone-quality exquisite, hypnotized nerves intent, it is a fearful come-down to be asked if he feels the draught from the door. He feels that nobody within hearing distance ought possibly to be conscious of a door. When this crisis is precipitated by a friendly hostess, the violinist shakes or wags his head stiffly above his chin-piece, and finishes up his selection as best he may. But when a kinsman is the culprit, fireworks commonly ensue.

But it is in attempts to regulate costume that we find the most rapid approach to the great central emotions of the individual. This is the topic upon which all members of a household feel that it is, if not their duty, certainly their privilege, to speak. They feel that

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they should be consulted about how their kin are clothed. There are families that manage this business with primitive measures and a high hand. No breath is wasted in debate. Unpopular bits of raiment, like incautious enemies of the Soviet, simply disappear.

There are many devices for putting such things out of the way, notably the Salvation Army, the rummage sale, and urn-burial. Family procedure varies. One earnest wife, for example, had reasoned hopelessly with her handsome iron-gray husband, who had taken to wearing a violent cubist tie. This tie, he insisted, meant to him a belated form of self-expression, a sort of Second Blooming, a Winter Rainbow. There was no question about the rainbow, his wife agreed. Too law-abiding herself to

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steal the expensive thing, she begged her son to take it back to college with him by mistake. This he did, and returned home the next week-end with forty new silk ties. The most famous man of fashion in his fraternity had seen the winter rainbow, had desired it, and had given in exchange all that he had.

Sometimes the article of dress offends not by reason of bad taste, but by reason of great age. It has suffered, the family feels, from the simple passage of time. A mackinaw, for instance, that has seen its best days; a crush hat that has given up the struggle; a pair of corduroy knickerbockers that has reached the stage eventually reached by all good corduroy when it creaks faintly like harness as its wearer walks

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about: these are the possessions that are dearly loved by their owners, and guarded apprehensively from lawless domestic ragpickers and officious junk-dealers on every hand.

The thing that would happen in the world, if this informal Green-Room Committee should cease to function in every home, is well illustrated whenever a large number of unattached unmarried people live in a town where nobody knows them well enough to lay down the law or steal. On a college campus, for instance, certain costumes become practically immortal; any academic assembly is a capital place to study interesting Old Favorites in various stages of repair. "Can I not," inquires Carlyle, "stitch myself one perennial suit of leather?" On a university

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campus he almost could. That college is poorly off indeed that does not hold as a precious tradition at least one *objet d'art* among its faculty's haberdashery — at the very least some storied overcoat or book-bag, or eye-glass-ribbon, or curious celebrated hat. The campus legend is enriched, and the student body not without its innocent joys, simply because there is nobody at hand with sufficient Wifely Love to say decisively, "It's high time that thing was called in."

This matter of laying down the law leads immediately to the third great inflammable topic on every hearthstone — the Criminal Code. The main statutes in the family codex may be firmly established, but there are usually certain by-laws that are not easy to enforce. Even so elementary a matter

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as the treatment of pets, for example, brings up a number of minor questions. That mother is very commanding, indeed, who can precisely enforce all her regulations as to what varieties of animals may and may not be brought into the house; what they shall be fed, and where; who shall put the cat out, and when; which of the neighbor's pets shall be encouraged and entertained. The animals themselves are so winning and so agile, that these laws are particularly liable to infringement. That child has missed something who has never surreptitiously let the cat out of the cellar after hours, and smuggled it upstairs to bed. The gentle creature thus released is so affectionate, so astonished, and so pleased. The only difficulty here is the little matter of concealment when older

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persons come unexpectedly upstairs on errands to one's room. A cat hastily thrust out of sight beneath a counterpane is strangely blind to its own interests. There is no way of conveying to it the necessity of lying still. And to the bright parental eye there is something unmistakable about the contour of a cat moving anxiously about beneath a quilt. Back to its dungeon it must go, leaving only the wistful and lovely memory of its furry companionable form.

Laws about pets, however, are as nothing compared with laws about cash. This matter subdivides logically into two phases — where the cash shall be kept, and how it shall be accounted for. There is a type of busy housewife who, even after years of steady training, constantly mislays her wallet and her

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check-book. She never really loses them; she simply cannot put her hand on them at need. It happens, then, that in the midst of a pleasant domestic chat the laundry is delivered at the door, and she scurries high and low in search of funds. At this point, the other members of the group, rather than spare her longer from the circle, hastily make up a purse among them and pay the bill.

Far worse than the lady who loses her cash is the one who loses track of her accounts, and feels obliged to fill in the empty pages from memory. This sort of retroactive accountant should be suppressed by every means. Late in the evening on the last day of the week, she opens her books and tries to jot down an itemized account of all that she has spent. "Do you remember,"



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she begins — and the tribal peace is doomed. She wants to know, from Monday to Saturday, the History of Mankind. A person of this stamp should not have a cash-account. Oliver Wendell Holmes once observed, “There are heads that can’t wear hats.” Similarly, there are heads that can’t keep books.

It would be interesting to know, not only the community practice regarding pets and cash, but also the code of honor that governs the overhearing of conversations in every talk-loving American home. Our houses are so open, so airy, and confidential. In nearly every typical American-built house there will be found at least one excellent listening-post, from which one can gather the main points of any discussion that may be going on. A certain

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amount of listening most families agree to countenance. When there is a group of callers for tea, for example, it is just as well to know what is going on before you come breezing in. The least you can do is to flit casually past the door, humming a little tune, and taking a hasty survey as you go. The question is, where is one to draw the line between legitimate reconnoitering and eavesdropping, as such.

The children of a hospitable young couple had this business worked out to a fine point. They entertained no scruples at all. There was a hallway at the top of the stairs, from which one could hear perfectly anything that was said on the floor below. When guests were invited for the evening, these children went dutifully to bed, but not

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to sleep. After the company had come out from dinner, and the evening's conversation was at its best, three solemn figures, each wrapped in a down-puff, would assemble by the balustrade. Huddled there, they heard the delicious peals of grown-up ladies' laughter, and the genial rumbling of the grown-up gentlemen's replies. No reception of later years can ever be as full of wit as those, when it was on pain of death if one should laugh. There was another peril too. The little audience in the first balcony must be always alert, ready to run back to bed at the slightest warning; because they knew from experience that, sooner or later in the course of the evening, the ladies of the group would be invited to inspect the sleeping nursery. Escorted by the children's proud

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young mother, the ladies would steal up the stairs for just a glimpse of the innocent little ones sound asleep. At such times, it was well, of course, to have the pretty tableau staged as advertised. Consequently the three down-puffs were girded on compactly, and each small listener was always poised to spring.

This is all very well in childhood; but in later years this general wish “for to see and for to know” is harder to deal with. In one large family, if any two of the relatives particularly wish to consult each other in assured privacy, they invite each other out to the garden, “to look at the Brussels sprouts.” The Brussels sprout is an interesting vegetable the year round; even in the dead of winter the corner is kept green, and frequently inspected in the snow.

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The eldest son of this house, on his return from France, wanted to give a certain girl who was leaving town for a long trip a chance to choose among his war-souvenirs. He arranged the matter carefully with his mother, in advance. He was going to bring Dorothy in early on Sunday afternoon, and let her see his treasures in the library, and then take her to her train. All went well. Dorothy was charmed with his things. But he made just one mistake: he closed the library door. Presently it opened. "What's this door shut for?" inquired his younger brother, darting headlong in. Seeing Dorothy, the brother, without waiting for an answer, darted headlong out again, banging the door behind him as he flew.

Dorothy, much amused, went on

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narrowing her choice. Once more the door burst wide. “Why you got this door shut?” — his younger sister this time, and again the horrified and precipitate retreat.

His guest was laughing again, but he was not amused. He did not want Dorothy to be amused. He liked her serious and sweet. This moment alone with her was to have been a rare little episode of delicate companionship. Now his little scene had been turned into a burlesque. He could not bear it. It seemed impossible in a civilized country.

And then the thing actually happened once more: another brother this time after a book. “What in *time* is this door —” A wide-eyed glance at the situation, a slam, and the retreating sound of running feet.

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It was too much. Leaving Dorothy for a moment, the returned warrior rushed out and confronted his relatives in the living-room. "Come one, come all!" said he in the smothered tones of contained fury. "If any one *else* wants to know why I shut that door, come in and stay in. Mother *said* that I might show Dorothy my junk." The selection made, he took the young lady to her train. Then he went for a long tramp, to work off his feelings before he met his relatives again.

Late in the afternoon he came home. Every one had gone to vespers, and the house was quiet. His resentment still burned hotly against the huddled life of a family where a man could not have a dignified moment of quiet parting with a girl, without clownish per-

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formances on the part of every one within a mile. But the house, of late so exuberant, was graciously expressive and very peaceful now. He poised on the arm of the davenport, hands in pockets, and glanced critically at the familiar objects in the room: a jonquil opening in the window; his mother's mending-basket, with his brother's skating-helmet on top; his father's newspaper pitched tent-fashion on the floor. Over in the corner stood his own 'cello, the bow hanging from one peg, the late afternoon sunlight making dark ruddy shadows on the curves of its fine old form. Everything in the room was perfectly at peace, yet everything stood potentially for something going on — his father's reading-lamp, his own brief-case, the basket of winter apples on the



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table, his sister's violin. Family life looked very harmonious, he thought grimly, if you weren't on the inside. Peculiar how such a lovely stage-set could have been the scene for such an impossible slapstick comedy, and for such a melodramatic thunderstorm of rage. The composition of that room expressed ideals; yet it was the scene of inelegant blunders, of ill-timed comings and goings, of skirmishes and cross-purposes and wrath.

Twilight and silence are weavers of strange spells. The most turbulent family life remembered in quieter years is full of unsuspected dignity and truth. Even reduced to its lowest terms, it was the period when, for a while, we were under close inspection of bright observing eyes; when our doings meant much

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to several active brains; when we heard and uttered fine unvarnished Truths; and where we knew one little group of lively fellow beings really fairly well. Irrelevant things from those days are never quite forgotten — not even the curiosity, the criticisms, and our sins against the Law. We would hardly forget them even if we could, for they contained a vital spark — a spark, indeed, so vital it was in its day a never-failing kindler of Fire in the Eye.

## THE HOUSE UNINTENTIONAL



F a hostess has dreams of building a House Beautiful, yet meanwhile lives in a House Unintentional,

she is tempted to apologize to guests. She is not an architectural snob, but she would like to have her visitors know that there is a gap between her ideals and her facts. A House Unintentional, either inside or outside, either in plan or in furnishing, just misses being what its present owners wish that it were. It is not the kind of setting they intended to live in. If they bought it, it was not quite what they were looking for; if they leased it, they had to take what they could get; if they inherited it,

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it dated from an unlucky period of American Art. All these things have power to worry the householder, especially the householder's wife. She would like to paint a label on certain portions of her house, saying, "NOT OUR IDEA."

If she lived in China, where manners are prescribed by more elderly and human gods, she might apologize all she liked. The grandee of a Chinese palace begs his venerable guests to forgive the wretched and intolerable rooms of his unseemly hovel. Conventionally the perfect Chinaman apologizes. Conventionally the correct Anglo-Saxon does not. This is very unfair to our half of the globe, because up and down the streets and avenues and terraces of all cities live delightful people who for one

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reason or another are lodged in houses that come nowhere near to representing their own taste.

The most striking example of a House Unintentional (aside from the Leaning Tower of Pisa) was, I think, a certain house on the outskirts of a sea-shore town. It had begun as a smart little mansard cottage in the eighteen-seventies; had later been made into a "two-family house" by having its roof raised and an extra story inserted; had then acquired a gabled addition that ran out along the side, partially obscuring one window so that it looked like half an eye peering out over the slope of the roof; had been bought by an elderly music-dealer who built up the ell into a sun-parlor, crowned all with a cupola, and along the skyline of the

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roof erected a wooden staff of music with a few bars of "Home, Sweet Home," in musical notation, painted black against the sky. All the children of three counties knew that house. On long rides and excursions we used to beg to be taken past it, only to be sure that it was still there, that lovely staff of wooden music, with its five lines and four spaces, its half and quarter notes, its wooden clef. The old music-dealer is dead now, and in his town you can no longer buy such Italian *E* strings, such silver *G*'s and such rosin as he kept in his small store. His descendants looked upon their mansion as owners of the House Unintentional always do. They have remodeled the place entirely, and they have taken down the enchanting musical phrase. Their home is the

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House Conventional now, with an entirely modern and harmless scheme of roof. Not long ago I drove past it and forgot to look at it at all. As they say in books, "it was not quite the same."

Not many houses have such picturesque exterior adventures as this. The interior of a house lends itself more readily to successive tastes. Sometimes the interior is unintentional on account of lack of funds to carry through a plan. There was one judicious couple, for instance, who resolved that, instead of setting up housekeeping with a complete outfit of inexpensive furniture, they would begin with two extremes: half of their things should be the very most perfect and permanent that could be found; the rest should be so cheap

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that when they moved or altered their living arrangements they could throw it away, thus saving transportation and permitting gradual replacement with thoroughly fine things. The theory was sensible, but their expenses in bringing up their large family proved to be so great that they could not afford to re-furnish even cheaply at every turn. So they have kept everything, eking out the deficiencies as best they could. Their house is now a jolly medley of all kinds of furniture — the beautiful and elegant, selected with fine discretion, costing handsome sums, interspersed with the wild and battered unintentional riff-raff that they had meant to throw away. Guests and the children enjoy the rickety old things. But the lady of that house, knowing what her



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fastidious intentions had been, is not quite reconciled.

The "Handy Man about the House" is also responsible for many an unforeseen effect. One father of a family has a special delight in tinkering with furniture and constructing astonishing bits of cabinet work here and there. His daughters call it the "Chippendale Complex"; hardwood is a magnet for his tools. When his eldest son was a baby, this Chippendale father went so far as to cut down one of the windows in the living-room in such a way that it matched no other architectural line. This was because the baby, learning to walk, wanted to look out of the window and could not reach. The good father maintained that a baby should have a lookout on life that was his own, so he

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lowered the window, not low enough for a French window, as the broad-minded baby was not supposed to *walk* out, but exactly to the height where a modern Baby Stuart could rest fat elbows on the sill and watch the sparrows on the lawn. Any one can see that the idea was sound sociology, but, if one does not know the story, that south window does look queer.

Of course, it would be ideal if all Houses Unintentional could be thoroughly overhauled, so that we might see only calm beauty and restful groupings everywhere. But each large city is itself a House Unintentional. Nobody planned the "residential sections" to look just as they do. Domestic architecture has got the start of us. Unless we can buy a plot of ground and build

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on it ourselves, we “transients” in the cities must many of us live where we can, and use our saw and hatchet sparingly, even in our dreams.

Yet while we wait for funds and taste to change the cities, I think that if there were a great Recording Angel keeping watch over the lives of houses, writing down their good deeds and their bad in the white pages of his Book, he would probably have a great deal of mercy for certain middle-aged houses, not old enough to be called “quaint.” Their present state is the handiwork of various groups; it is the sum-total of fads and additions and compromises and repairs. No living person could endorse their architecture now. Yet the house that seems like nothing but terrible gingerbread to the architect-critic,

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sometimes means home and comfort to the man who for some good reason has to live there. If you really have to live in a House Unintentional, it gives you an interesting time. In all forms of life, a discrepancy suggests enterprise to the imagination. The House Unintentional presents always a discrepancy, always a field for experiment and change. It has what Professor Palmer calls "The Glory of the Imperfect." Like politics, like literature, like the human race itself, the House Unintentional is the product of too many "influences" to be dull.

I had not even guessed at these surprising faculties of the Unintentional House until Phineas and I camped in one for a while, when we first arrived in Pittsburgh from the East. We had

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amused ourselves on our long ride from Cape Cod by pointing out to each other the most beautiful houses along the Lincoln Highway. We had watched the changes in the skyline — the gables and windmills and sand-dunes of the Cape, the rectangles and palisades of New York, the baronial towers and trees of Princeton, and the Gothic peaks of Tuscarora and Laurel Ridge. Then, coasting down the Alleghenies into Pittsburgh, we began our search for a place to live. We inspected every empty corner from Turtle Creek to Turkey-Foot Run, from Sewickley to Verona, from Valley View to Squirrel Hill. If your first view of a strange city is seen through house-hunting eyes, you retain in your mind's eye a good measure of what a pathologist might call "acute detail."

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Our house-hunting was complicated by the fact that we each had the building craze, and before we could build, we must save. So we hardened our hearts against certain bright new cottages that we might have leased, and looked for quarters that would permit us to put down in our budget beside the conventional item "*Shelter*," the air-castle item "*House*."

And the upshot of our search was a true old House Unintentional, built of small yellow bricks much like the yellow Dutch bricks that one sees in the tiny chapel between Tarrytown and Sleepy Hollow. The house had been designed to stand between two others in a long row of precisely similar houses, set closely side by side. But for some reason the adjoining house had never been

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built, and ours stood unaccompanied on a corner lot. It had consequently a surprising air of missing the side-partners that it had expected to stand between. Its third story was capped by a steep and narrow gambrel, like the restricted flare of a Dutch bonnet; the front and rear of the house were composed almost entirely of windows, and what windows there were on the sides had been put in later than the rest, irregularly, at the caprice of successive owners. The interior had been planned for one family, but had been recently sliced horizontally into three compact apartments. The only one vacant was on the second floor, and we moved in.

Our part of the house had been designed as detached sleeping-rooms, no two of them connected, but all opening

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into the wide hall. Even the built-on upstairs porch covered with morning-glory vines was entered by a French window from the hallway. If you cared to progress from living-room to dining-room, you made a pious pilgrimage through the corridor. Before each meal, I wheeled my rubber-tired tea-cart swiftly out from the kitchen, along the hall, and into the dining-room, careful as I went not to take off a wheel on the jamb of either door. The tea-wagon and I ran up considerable mileage in this way, and learned to drive accurately with cups of consommé as passengers, making due allowances for sharp curves ahead.

“Do what you like to the house, short of cutting doors,” said the kind owner. “Redd it up as much as you please.”



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Turned loose with paint-brush and tack-hammer, we made our kitchen as Dutch as we could, because our roof and bricks suggested it, and there was already blue-tiled paper on the walls. In true House Beautiful fashion, we used blue-and-white linoleum on the floor, slabs of heavy glass over white oilcloth for shelves and table, white narrow curtains in the windows bordered with a design of stiff yellow tulip flowers. Whenever I went into that kitchen, I felt that I ought to be costumed like the Old Dutch Cleanser woman, with the flaps of my white bonnet flying and my wooden shoes clattering as I ran. When company was expected, one could pile grapefruit in a pewter bowl in the center of the white kitchen table, and leave the door of this sunny

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Pieter de Hooch interior ostentatiously ajar.

But our real adventure was our fireplace. The house was old enough to have had one in the front room, but it was stopped up with solid masonry, like the door of Tutankhamen's tomb. "Open it if you like," said the owner when we asked permission, "but it may smoke. It hasn't been used in my day."

We considered. A friend of ours had done this very thing in a strange house, and his fire had smoked. He decided that the opening was too high, and that he must piece it down with tiles. His wife designed some decorative tiles for the purpose, adorned with the encouraging legend,

*"Aha! Aha! I have looked on ye fire  
and am warm!"*

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The tiles were adjusted, the inscription read aloud as a becoming incantation, the tinder lighted — but the smoke still came out in great wreaths, the kind that hang from the ceiling like Florida moss. The fire simply could not breathe. Neither could any one else. In great bitterness of spirit our friends named their pretty chimney-nook, “Aha, Aha.”

Phineas and I thought earnestly about this. Then we resolved to go ahead. Phineas discovered that a bachelor friend of his was in a position to borrow a sledgehammer. Phineas had a cold-chisel of his own. The bachelor came over one evening, the deed was done, an experimental fire lighted breathlessly (they gallantly let me apply the first match) — and our fireplace

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drew. We had a pair of ancient brass andirons that we had been storing in the corridor, where they had peered out at us between the slats of their crate, like chickens on their way to a prize show. These we now released from their packings, and introduced them to their warm coop. Oak logs from the mountains, driftwood from New England, left-over Christmas trees from the Adirondacks — once more we could perform the proper ritual of poking at the fire.

In our eyes, that fireplace “made” our living-room and offered a gathering-point for the great-grandmother furniture from Connecticut. To hide the golden-oak woodwork of the room, we put low white bookshelves all around the walls, Chinese rugs on the floor, ivy

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and ferns on one window-sill, hyacinths and jonquils on the others — in fact, we sometimes forgot that our house was unintentional at all.

I have not exactly come to rest in my thought about an Unintentional House. But when I remember that blessed early camp, I know that I shall never look upon one without a wave of recognition in my heart. I have lived in one myself, and it has taught me that my own soul is a House Unintentional too, the handiwork of varied groups and incongruous influences and half-developed ideas. It is rather a sad little feeling, this business of possessing a house or a soul altogether different from one's dreams. And so we wish we might apologize, we owners of the Unintentional, whether in architecture or in life. "Do not," our

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hearts cry, “suppose that we *like* to have our hall-paper stained by yesterday’s rain; we shall improve things when the roof-man and the paper-hanger come next week. We do wish that our rooms connected; but meanwhile please avail yourselves of the well-worn runway in the hall. Our mahogany and old stenciled chairs, we know, are inadmissible with golden-oak mopboards and window-sills; please try to forget the golden oak behind the white bookshelves, and look not too sharply at the color of the window-ledge beneath the hyacinth in its blue luster bowl.”

But we know we must not talk this way, short of the shores of the Yellow Sea. If we apologize, we commit our guests to a rapid fire of admiring pro-

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test, always a tremendous strain. We have to let them take us as we are, trusting that some day they may see us as we hope to be. After all, contempt is a cheap sentiment, even when applied to so changeable an apparition as a house.


Sometimes Phineas and I, on trips to cities where we are strangers, amuse ourselves after a busy day by exploring the quieter streets of the town. Whenever on such evening strolls we chance upon a real example of the House Unintentional, we pause for a moment to inspect its individual conglomeration of odd roof-line and ornament and sleeping-porch and excrescent kitchenette. We know that some one ought to change this house, but it has been changed so often already that it is a wonder it still

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stands. In honor of its large experience and its obvious readiness for new enterprises still to come, we offer it what the generation who built it would call "our respects," as it stands there so upright in the darkness, printing its careful gingerbread against the stars.



DO NOT OPEN BEFORE  
CHRISTMAS

ROBABLY the conscientious, right-thinking person is not tempted by the Christmas package that comes early by mail. Who could wish to break the Santa Claus seals before the holiday, and who would disregard the friendly request plainly printed on the box?

But when that popular injunction, "Please do not open before Christmas," first came into vogue, it split our family into two hostile camps.

My brother Geoffrey was the leader of a little gang of willful men who believed in opening each package as it

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came. Any true friend, Geoffrey said, would wish to give the greatest amount of pleasure with his Christmas present. And the greatest amount, Geoffrey was sure, was to be had if one examined and enjoyed each gift by itself on its arrival, at the moment when curiosity was at its peak, on a day when gifts were not to be had in bulk.

The other faction, led by our mother and ably supported by Barbara, never argued. They acted. Whenever they could, they met the postman at the door before he had time to ring the bell, and took all packages swiftly upstairs to a secret hiding-place where they kept such family parcels as they could lay hands on under lock and key.

My own opinions on the subject used to be vague. My presents were opened or

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unopened according to the person who happened to be with me at the time.

The post-office was the scene of one early opening in which Geoffrey was my "control." The neat white parcel looked plain and innocent enough as I drew it out of the lock-box. I knew that it was from the star heroine of our college dramatic club, and my curiosity was aroused.

"Want me to open it for you?" inquired my brother helpfully, getting out his knife.

Retribution was swift and picturesque. The cover was stuck tight, resisting our most scientific efforts to get it off. Finally, resorting to sheer force, Geoffrey gave it a last long powerful wrench. The cover flew open, and out leaped cloud after cloud of cerise pow-

der — theatrical rouge in memory of one fateful night when I mislaid the make-up kit. There was rouge enough in that box for a circus, for the Hippodrome; more than enough for the whole post-office. It powdered our coats and settled into the eyelets of Geoffrey's shoes, and made a rosy ring around us on the post-office floor. We clapped on the cover and fled, but the floor of the post-office, in spite of obvious municipal scrubblings, greeted us with a natural blush for days.

This experience, which should have worked a cure, served only to add zest to our curiosity. We now realized as never before that one never could tell what might be inside a simple Christmas box.

With this background of unsettled

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traditions, I found myself with a divided mind when I spent my first Christmas all alone in a strange city, away from relatives and home. Should I open my packages as they came, or should I hoard the little parcels for a concentrated celebration by myself on Christmas Day?

I could hardly imagine the sensations of carrying out the holiday customs all alone. It seemed like a plan for setting off lonely fireworks on the Fourth of July on a deserted prairie; or a solitary observance of Halloween, with lanterns and individual ghosts for myself alone. I decided to let the Christmas season pass as nearly unnoticed as possible. Any attempt at working up the proper spirit would, I felt sure, be either flat or overdone.

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But distance and solitude are famous ripeners of the sentiments. The first box to arrive was from my sister, and I looked at the familiar handwriting with an affectionate thrill. Then I looked for the usual warning on the box. There was none. No label prevented me from opening the gift at once. The box was large and heavy. Suppose it contained perishables? I reached for the scissors.

Then I thought suddenly of Barbara's agile form as she used to go scorching at top speed up the stairs with a dozen assorted packages clutched anxiously under her arm. She had been the star performer in the art of intercepting the postman and inventing burglar-proof hiding-places for our gifts. Whatever vagueness there might be

## DO NOT OPEN BEFORE CHRISTMAS

about my sentiments, there was no doubt about hers.

Why had this noble watch-dog of our treasury omitted the "Do not open" label on my box? Evidently she trusted me. In the face of this tacit confidence, could I fail her? Honorably I set the tempting box aside, and used it as a foundation on which to arrange any further gifts that might reach me. Even the Christmas cards I tucked out of sight with the merest glance. After all, I would obey the best traditions of the season, and would open my gifts when I awoke on Christmas morning. Perhaps sleigh-bells would waken me, perhaps carols or chimes.

But I had no time to look at my gifts that Christmas morning. It was the telephone bell that woke me. An old

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friend of mine wanted to know if she might bring her children into town to spend the day with me. She had planned to surprise me, as her husband was away, but had decided to telephone just before train-time to make sure that it would be convenient. She had learned my address from my sister. Her children, she said, remembered me, and what fun they always had playing with my toys.

My toys! The toys that they remembered were the contents of a certain huge old covered basket at home where we keep the accumulated dolls and tea-sets of two generations. Oh, the cook-stove and the doll-furniture, and the horses! O Babylon, Babylon! And here I was without a shred of a plaything in the world.



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In the moments that remained before I must rush to meet the express, I ransacked my little rooms for anything that might serve as a toy. My hat-box would do as the chief ingredient for a doll-house. My library paste and scissors — one can always improvise toys of a sort. But these children were such connoisseurs.

Would my neighbors have toys? Toys in an apartment house? The audacious thought sent me flying out along the stairs. Gone, most of the dwellers along our quiet corridors, gone on holiday pilgrimages to their scattered homes. No doubt their rooms were filled with rocking-horses and kindergarten blocks, but their doors were closed. I remembered stories of how Eugene Field used to

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break into the apartments of his neighbors in the astonished section of Chicago where he lived, and enjoy a bit of apple-pie or a slice of bread and jam. But I doubted if even Mr. Field would have been intrepid enough to break in and steal a rocking-horse.

The few friendly souls who were still at home were alive to my emergency. Christmas Day, stores all closed, and no toys! The newly married couple in the suite just below mine greeted me with gusts of laughter. Anything they had was mine; a satin cushion shaped like a peach, innumerable jack-knives, an enormous red pencil given them by a lumberman, the phonograph, the cat — anything I could fancy. I explained that the children were of an age destructive to cats and to peach-colored

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satin, but I accepted the pencil, and a fashion magazine from which to cut paper dolls, and went gratefully out to continue my house-to-house canvass down the halls. When I finally mounted the stairs again, I had a paperweight in the shape of a lion, an Easter rabbit that had been a candy-box, a Billiken, a rubber elephant, a celluloid camel, and a Chinese pagoda.

With a collection like this, no Christmas party could go astray. All day, pausing only for necessary meals, we constructed circus-tents and side-shows and paper-doll audiences with which to carry on a driving trade in tickets and souvenirs. Then my cherubic Dutch-cut guests gathered around the fireplace for a feast of popcorn, and at last a Christmas story just at dusk.

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When my guests had taken the train again that night, I let myself into my room once more, snapped on the light, threw a fresh log on the fire, and stepped cautiously over the site of the recent circus to my neglected heap of Christmas presents. With the evening before me, I could afford plenty of time.

First I looked at the cards, tiny bits of art-craft of every sort; a window with icicles and frosted holly; a candle burning behind leaded panes; a fireplace with its row of stockings and its Yule log; a snow-thatched bird-house with the brave little bluebird of happiness flying in; old English bell-ringers with square-cut coats and buckled shoes; children in scarlet coats singing Christmas carols; and one card with a shining golden star in a winter sky.

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They were only the usual Christmas cards, such as one sends each year. But as I read the familiar handwriting of the people who sent them, the greetings were something more than scribbled messages on pretty cards. Collected here for a special season at an appointed hour, they brought a group of friendly spirits trooping into the room. Then I opened the packages. If they had been untied a week ago, their contents would have been just as delightful, just as thoughtfully selected. But opened ahead of time they could not have come in for their share of this pervasive Christmas mood. It was just here that I was aware of a genuine conviction of my own. There was something of value in the traditional custom of surprise.

I saved my sister's box until the last.

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Inside the cover was a card with a scribbled message.

“My dear,” it began, “I’ve just learned that Sue Driscoll and children plan to surprise you on Christmas. I know you’ll need warning, and also toys. Here are both. I know how you always open packages before Christmas.”

One by one I unwrapped the things in that box. I took out the tiny cook-stove, the tops, the dishes, the plasticine, and the dolls. I arranged them in view upon the window-box, and then I settled back stoically and turned off the light. What irony! The one gift ever sent mainly intended to be opened before Christmas had been the one that convinced me that no gift should ever meet that fate.

The fire from the back-log flickered

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brightly up. In its light I watched the array of little objects on the window-seat. Each tiny cup and saucer was strongly sculptured on the shadows; the stiff toy horse cast a long thin shadow on the wall. Then I turned to the little menagerie on the hearth-rug. The celluloid camel stood outside his cardboard tent, and his silhouette on the tent-flap was the shadow of a dromedary beside a desert camp-fire. The rubber elephant pausing on his way across the handle of the wood-basket cast the wavering shadow of an ancient war-elephant crossing an arching bridge. To-morrow I must disperse the menagerie and burn my tents, but Christmas Day had been perfect. I did not care if that precious box had been opened too late. I knew now that the

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Christmas spirit could make its way in spite of chance mistakes and difficulties; that the day should have in it the voices of children and the thoughts of home; and that the evening should be a reunion of the memories of old friends. The fire crackled comfortably. The camel's eyes were half shut.

And now, when I go home for Christmas, I too circumvent the postman at the door, and store the gifts away. It is not altogether artificial and "for children," this emphasis upon the spirit of a given time of year. Through centuries of custom we have kept the response to the charm of special moments, annual festivals, the recurrence of a celebrated day. However old we may live to be, the Christmas customs are ancient enough to dwarf our years.



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We can hardly know, perhaps, the genial unrestraint of a Dickens Christmas, the revels of the Cratchit household, or of the Pickwick-Wardle celebrations. The boar's head and the yule log are not among the conveniences of a modern home. But the gift-custom we retain. In spite of distance and the scattering of friends, the Christmas post sends flying a million gifts and greetings, all sorts of fat parcels mailed prudently a week ahead of time, their covers neatly stamped and ribbons stoutly knotted, and on the wrappings a warning holly seal, "Not to be opened before Christmas" — a warning which, I am now convinced, had better be obeyed.

## BREAKING AND ENTERING



MAN never knows to what extent his house is a castle until he finds himself locked out. Ordinarily, his dwelling appears to be an informal, airy thing, with windows that go up and down and doors that let him in. The whole place is on easy terms with the outside world. All the verbs for entering or leaving the house suggest this intimate hospitality: friends “drop in,” breezes “wander through,” ladies “step out” on errands, and the children “burst in” from school. This last, the bursting concept, is the only one that fits the mood of the man locked out.

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There is something peculiarly galling about the non-possession of a key, especially when one remembers exactly where it is. It seems too small and trifling a tool to make all this difference. In all essentials, one has a right to enter the house. But simply for the lack of one tiny metal object to insert in a given keyhole, one is as homeless as an Arab without a tent. The stern house, suddenly taking on an unfamiliar fortress-aspect, uses no judgment, makes no allowances. One feels tricked. It is like standing before one's own sentry without the password, or at one's safe without the combination, or at one's own drawbridge without a horn.

A house-owner in this emergency wishes that he had not made his dwelling so absurdly tight. He might have

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left at least one loophole for members of the family and guests. Looking at his own securely fastened house from the outside, he feels much as a careful needle-woman feels when she has to rip out a seam; it would have saved her a good deal of time and trouble if she had not sewed it quite so well. Similarly, the master of the house feels that proper caution, though well enough in its place, has been overdone.

At this point, the first step is to go around trying all the doors and windows, hoping against hope that one has been carelessly left unlocked, and feeling around door-jambs and under mats to see if a possible stray key has been left out. The second step is to collect whatever there is lying about in the way of metallic wedge-shaped objects

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or battering-rams; lawn-scissors, for instance, hose-nozzles, bicycle-pumps, and other burglars' tools. The third step is onward and upward, when one climbs.

But though the main steps in the performance are fairly standardized, different types of men will stage the drama variously. This kind of predicament is most apt to befall them in the summer, when their families are away. The ultra-proud man, after a few dignified sorties around the house, turns away and resorts decorously to a hotel, employing a carpenter or a locksmith next day. The impetuous super-man will smash a pane of glass. But the average man makes it a neighborhood affair.

No old-time house-warming for new residents could be more gay. He stands

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on the step and hails a passing friend. In five minutes the suburb is agog. All the women are worried about him, all the men are entertained, and all the little boys are thrilled. Properly managed, this can be the most-talked-of *matinée* of the season. He is the center of attention. All the little gamins in town beg to be allowed to climb for him. He has a swarm of them in the pear-tree, and they bring him all the neighborhood keys and tools. Nobody can remain indifferent to the spectacle of a solid domestic business man trying to break into his own house. The act of standing outside closed portals has an eternal appeal; poets and painters love the situation — witness the Peri barred out of Paradise, and Cupid locked out of a heart. Everybody is on the side of

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the man who has every right to get in, and can't.

An eminent but absent-minded Justice of the New York Bar once stirred up his fashionable community on a summer's evening in just this way. Dusk had fallen, and no key or tool had been found that would budge any of his doors; most of them were fastened with Yale locks. So a ladder was fetched and braced against an upper window that the Justice thought he had carelessly left unlocked. Twenty wiry little boys were dancing up and down in the garden imploring to be allowed to climb the ladder. But His Honor was hale and independent, and preferred to go up himself.

Two substantial citizens held the ladder firm, pressing it steadily against the

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wistaria vine, and up went the Judge's massive form. Sure enough, his window was unlocked. He pushed it up successfully, and in he went — all the little boys drawing an audible sigh of envy as his last great foot was drawn upward and in over the sill. The drama was over, and the neighbors were about to stroll away homeward, when at the open window appeared once more the great Justice's shadowy bulk. Signaling to his ladder-men to stand firm, he got out carefully foot by foot, and climbed deliberately down the ladder again.

“What's the matter?” asked one of the ladder-holders anxiously. “Was that upstairs room locked too?”

“Oh, no,” said the absent-minded Justice heartily, “everything's all right, thanks. I just went down to the front



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door and snapped the Yale lock open and found an extra key for my pocket, and so *now* I can go in."

Technically, it seemed, the Judge had not ruled that he was *in* until he had entered, according to precedent, by the proper door.

This would seem to have been a sufficiently happy evening for the neighbors. But the most picturesque lock-out that ever happened in that quiet suburb took place later, and is still referred to familiarly as "the time when Alexander Trumbull took in the cream."

Alexander's parents were away. Like most young men keeping bachelor hall, Alexander believed that a commuter could save great sums of time and energy if he ate breakfast while he dressed, stepping efficiently back and forth be-

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tween his shredded-wheat-cake and his dressing-table. For his cereal, he had a bottle of cream delivered each morning on the porch. Ordinarily, this cream-bottle sat on the doormat, and Alexander could reach out one gaunt arm and take it in. But on the morning of his adventure, the bottle sat quite a distance from the door, on the step. Alexander calculated the distance with his eye. Then he glanced sharply up and down the street, and at the windows across the way. It was very early. All was safe. Clad only in that simple white dimity running-suit in which gentlemen so often appear in advertisements and so seldom in real life, Alexander stepped discreetly with one foot upon the cool floor of the verandah, and leaned far out to reach for the cream, holding the

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screen-door open with his other foot. It was a very long reach, and just as he grasped the cream-bottle, the screen-door slipped out of his foot, as it were, and slammed shut.

Most screen-doors are flimsy things, made chiefly to keep out flies. But the Trumbull house was ship-shape; the screen-door shut with a spring lock. Alexander could look through and see all the rooms where he would give the world to be; but he could not get in. He was completely taken by surprise with the patent injustice of it all — to stand a shivering exile at the door of his father's house — with only an obdurate meshwork of first-class fly-screen between him and all the comforts of home. He tried to push his way in. But unless you have some implement more special-

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ized than a cream-bottle, a well-made screen-door does not "give."

Once more scanning the avenue for observers, Alexander tripped airily around the house among the rose-bushes, over the dewy grass to the garage. Locked, of course. No tools lying about. Alexander paused in the lee of a lilac-bush to reflect. Lurking there, like a slender Theban messenger from an early dynasty, with Pharaoh's royal cream-bottle still dangling from his hand, he thought bitterly to himself that there would be nothing quaint about his appearance if time could be rolled back a few thousand years, or if the texture of his costume could be suddenly changed to the serviceable gray jersey of a bathing-suit. He had appeared on many of the sunny beaches

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of the world clad in such. It was all an arbitrary matter of Time and Texture; the inexorable power of Material Detail. The artificiality of these distinctions swept over him, but did not make him feel at ease.

At this point, his next-door neighbor opened a gate, and strolled out to his garage. Stealthily Alexander went skimming across the lawn to the pergola covered with rambler roses. Half-sheltered there among the buds, he whistled, and signaled vividly with the cream-bottle his distress. The neighbor, hilarious but quick to act, fetched overcoat and linen duster and a screwdriver, and together they unscrewed the hinges on the door, and pried it out of its frame as one takes a cake from a pan.

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But this device of taking a door from its hinges cannot be so lightly undertaken if the house belongs to some one else. When Phineas and I moved into a fraction of a house in Pittsburgh, we decided that whatever else we did, we should have plenty of keys. So Phineas had six doorkeys made. Three he gave to me, and three he kept. In former years, Phineas had been celebrated for getting locked out of boarding-places. He usually had a friend who was primed to get up and let him in. Surreptitious midnight signals to friends at boarding-houses always seem less official than ringing the proprietor's bell; besides, there is always a chance for a pleasant exchange of courtesies in this line. There happened to be a long gas-pipe in the back yard of Phineas's favorite

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lodgings, and he used this to rouse up his friend in a room two floors above. When you pick up a long slim gas-pipe and rear it up above your head like a mast, it wavers and bends in quite a willowy way. But it does not sound willowy when you beat with it upon the window of your sleeping friend.

Phineas had made up his mind that there should be none of this in his married life. So had I.

In the middle of a busy morning, my doorbell rang, and I ran down to sign for an express parcel on the porch, whereupon the front door blew together behind me, and locked. Everybody else was away. The first-floor rooms were locked for the vacation; the landlady was out of town. My code precluded telephoning to Phineas in office hours.

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I sat down on the porch to consider my next move. Did I dare to pull off the screen from the low cellar-window near the street where the men had been putting in the coal? I dared. In broad daylight I pried open that window, and slid neatly in at the narrow opening — too small, I noticed with pleasure, for the average burglar — and perched like a mountaineer on the crest of the winter's supply of coal. Then I started to edge my way down the black incline. When one coasts down the precipitous slope of a pile of furnace coal, one's progress is accompanied by thundering little landslides that remind one of the sound made by a resolute janitor undermining the winter's tonnage with his spade. I arrived at the base, bringing part of the mountain with me, and then ran up the



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cellar stairs. The door at the top was locked, cleverly locked, with no knob or handle of any kind on the cellar side. I beat upon it, but it was a solid wall. I felt like the lovers in the last act of "Aïda," except that their dungeon is open on one side toward the audience, and mine was not. Everything but that one window in the cellar was perfectly tight. Could I really creep out of that narrow window over the coal again, in full sight of the street? I found that I could. So I scaled the face of the coal again, and emerged like a gopher into light and air. One of the neighbors saw me this time, and stepped over to inquire.

"Better come and spend the day with me," said she kindly. "No key in the neighborhood fits those doors. We

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tried more than a hundred of them one day when your landlady got locked out.”

“How did she finally get in?” I inquired hopefully.

“She happened to remember that she had an extra key in an inner pocket of her purse,” said my hostess. “It’s a good thing to have an extra key.”

This was true, but I had three extra keys: my trouble was that I was in my morning-dress, with no pocket and no purse.

I broke my wifely ruling. I telephoned, on my neighbor’s telephone, and I told Phineas my plight, and I asked him home for lunch. He was charmed. He would be with me as fast as our slightly eccentric Ford could come. Back I went to the porch,

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and presently beheld the familiar vehicle approaching, jauntily dangling its Massachusetts license over the Pennsylvania hills. The brake on our Ford, Phineas says, acts like the back-spacer on a typewriter. It not only stops you suddenly, it sets you back. Swiftly Phineas dashed over the last hill, coasted down to the curb, back-spaced vigorously, and got out.

“Let’s go in,” said I, meeting him at the step, “and I’ll get lunch.”

“Oh, let’s sit in the hammock a minute first,” begged Phineas, “while you tell me all about it.”

We sat down and he listened with flattering attention, and then he asked, “What else had you planned to do in the line of breaking in?”

“Nothing,” said I, “except maybe to

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send for a very thin carpenter to take off that cellar door.”

“Anything else?” persisted Phineas.

“Well,” I confessed, “I did think of ringing in an alarm for the hook and ladder company, but I thought of you instead.”

“What would you have done if I had been out of town?” continued Phineas.

“Waited for the landlady to come home, I guess,” said I. “Come along in.”

“What if she had been off for a week’s vacation?” Phineas went on, unmoved.

“Well,” said I, “Mrs. Esterbrook invited me to visit her.”

“Do you suppose she would invite two of us?” inquired Phineas dreamily.

“Phineas!” I demanded with dawn-

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ing suspicion, "isn't your key in your pocket?"

"No," confessed Phineas, "I find it's not. All my keys are in my other suit."

At this disclosure, our relations were joyfully transformed. A moment before, I had been the poor catechised waif, with Phineas for my patron and preserver, he the Lord of the Manor with power to keep me shut out or let me in. Now, the simple fact that he, too, lacked a key brought him instantly to my un-housed human level.

Of course we got in. Phineas climbed upward like a Human Fly, and pried out the tacks that fastened the screen on a high window with his knife. I stood below, receiving the tacks as he dropped them to me, acting as what Phineas (knowing that I was too de-

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pendent on his services to object) called the Tacks Collector. Rolling up the screencloth like a scroll, he went diving head foremost through the open window, and presently appeared at the door below, and hospitably let me in.


There are doubtless many persons whose presence of mind is so great that they have never been caught out without a key. But with the large majority of the home-going population, there will come an occasion or two in a lifetime when the lock-out is complete. When this happens, then is the time to get just a whiff of the spiritual cold blast that blows between the man who goes in and the man who stays out. Such accidental things make all the difference. Such material details, such

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artificial keys. Once having broken in, we recover from the sensation very soon. But now and then it comes over us again, the memory of how exasperating it does feel to be standing on the threshold of the place where one belongs, ready to enter, eager to get in, but quite unreasonably and completely locked out, because one has no key.

THE FABLE OF THE LOST  
PAPER

WITH APOLOGIES TO DR. BARTON AND HIS  
"SAFED THE SAGE," TO WHOM THIS  
FABLE WAS ORIGINALLY ADDRESSED

EHOLD as I was busied  
about my tasks toward set  
of sun, came Phineas my  
spouse unto me and in-  
quired of me, saying, "Canst thou tell  
me, O woman, what thou hast done  
with the 'Literary Digest' of the week  
before last? This week's copy have I  
found, and last week's, but the copy of  
the week before that can I in no wise  
find."

Then answered I and said unto my  
lord, "Verily I have not touched



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thy 'Literary Digest,' neither have I taken it away. Thou wilt assuredly find it in the place where thou didst lay it down."

But Phineas answered and said, "On my desk in my study I laid it down, and it was there last night at the going down of the sun. But it hath utterly departed thence. Like dew on a garden of cucumbers it hath vanished away."

Then said I, "O Phineas, hast thou looked diligently on all parts of thy study-desk, yea, and in all places nigh unto it, and on thy great table, and on the shelves hard by, and in the newspaper rack?"

Then the heart of Phineas waxed hot within him, and he lifted up his voice and smote upon his breast and cried, "Through all of my possessions have I

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searched, yea, also in all parts of our habitation. Verily thou and thy handmaidens have been cleaning my room again, and my 'Literary Digest' hast thou carelessly cast away. Lo, not a spot on the earth have I that is mine, no, not a copy of the 'Literary Digest' that I may call mine own."

Then saw I my lord's will for me, and I rose and gat me up to the study of Phineas my spouse. . And he shewed me the papers through which he had searched, and behold the pile of them was very great. But one periodical saw I that was not with the rest in the great heap, and behold it lay in the shadow of the desk of Phineas, between his desk and the great seat whereon Phineas in his weariness had cast himself down. Then went I softly and looked secretly

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over the back of the chair, and gazed at the paper that was upon the floor. And behold it was the “Literary Digest” of the week before last.

Then yet again inquired I of Phineas, “O Phineas, be not angry with thine handmaiden and let not thy wrath wax hot within thee. Answer me once again. Hast thou verily sought earnestly in all parts of thy room, in all parts both high and low?”

Then waxed Phineas very wroth and spake harshly out of his sore displeasure and said, “For an hour have I searched both high and low, and verily it hath been cast away. How many times shall I implore thee to restrain the hand of thy cleaning-woman, that she may remain far from my desk, that she may not lay hands upon it, but that she may

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rather look upon it only and tremble afar off?"

And I answered and said, "O Phineas, to-morrow is the day for thy room to be cleaned. At that time will I gather thy papers together and arrange them in chronological order. But for now, I pray thee, look down and behold what lies in the shadow of thine hand hard by over against the foremost leg of the chair whereon thou sittest. Behold thy 'Literary Digest' is in the place where I said thou wouldst find it, yea, in the place where thou didst lay it down."

Then fled I from the presence of Phineas my spouse. But to all wives far and near, yea, to all women both small and great, I bear witness: There is one thing that a spouse will not perform, yea, two that he will in no wise accomplish. And

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the first is to put up his books and papers when he cometh in, and the second is to find them if they be left lying in the spot where he hath laid them down.

## A SAIL! A SAIL!



THE Standard Dictionary, making due allowance for emergencies, defines a sailboat very warily. "A sailboat," it says, "is a boat that is or may be impelled by a sail or sails." This definition, in my judgment, could not be improved. The dictionary might have had our own sailboat in mind when it spoke.

Until I met this boat, sails had always seemed to me to belong on horizons, or in books. I had not hoped to have one in my control.

"You'll take to it easily," Phineas assured me, as we rowed out into the little cove where the sailboat spent the

A SAIL! A SAIL!

night. "We'll just take a little sail out around the lighthouse past Shell Island, and then into the bay to the big dock. I told Veronica to meet us there for a swim at eleven."

We started before ten. Phineas had thought best to allow a good margin of time, for this boat of his, he told me, was like some horses, less sensitive than the average to the rein.

It looked docile enough as I climbed in. It was not very much larger than the rowboat itself, but it was equipped with those items of seafaring gear that set a sailboat apart forever in a landsman's mind as something fabulous and rare. To one who has spent life inland, the most hackneyed terms of salt-water vocabulary seem like a literary language, to be used only by Captain Hook

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and Dick Dead-Eye, and Conrad and John Silver and Defoe. Here I had my first chance to bandy such words about. Our craft might be small and cranky; but it had a mast, a sprit, a sail on the sprit, two thwarts, a center-board, a tiller, a life-buoy, an anchor, and a sheet. We took along some oars.

“When I have shown you the main points,” said Phineas, busily hooking on the sail, “you can tack out of the cove against the wind.” Then, catching the light breeze in the little sail, he went through all the right maneuvers for my benefit; and I, as intelligent lecture audience, learned what it was to put about, to sail close to the wind, to port the helm — to do everything except the one act in which I later specialized.



“Now,” said Phineas, “we’ll change seats. You’ll have to be good and firm with the tiller. This boat doesn’t understand hints. When you want to turn her, give her a good full yank.”

“How shall I know which way to yank?” I asked, taking the sheet in my hand and seating myself by the tiller with care.

“I’ll tell you,” promised Phineas. “In a minute when I give the signal, put her over hard to the left.”

I made a rapid mental calculation to decide which would be the left as the boat, the tiller, the rudder, or Phineas saw it. As I did this, I knew that Phineas would soon learn about a deficiency of mine that I had hoped to conceal from him forever. The fact is, I do not instinctively know right from left; that is,

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I have to solve an original in geometry every time I have to make practical application of the terms. I try not to let this become too evident, especially since I have found that this matter forms one part of modern tests for feeble-mindedness, or worse. But now and then comes a crisis that exposes me. In gymnasium drill, for instance, when the command is "Right, *dress!*" I am just as likely to dress left.

"Phineas," said I, trying to speak naturally, "there's something about me you don't know. I can't tell right from left."

"Oh, well," replied Phineas lightly, "that won't matter. On a boat we say starboard and port."

This is typical of the way in which my friends view my disorder. They

## A SAIL! A SAIL!

think that I confuse the words, and that my difficulty will clear up if they use synonyms, such as clockwise and counter-clockwise, gee and haw. But I do in theory know what the words mean. What I lack is the feeling in my bones. Under this handicap I was about to sail a boat.

“Now!” exclaimed Phineas as we bore down upon an anchored sloop that was bobbing in the eel-grass near the shore. “Put about!”

Obediently, about I put. I gave the tiller a mighty jerk in what I judged would, in Phineas’s opinion, be the left.

“Hi!” said Phineas, brandishing an oar. “Turn her to the left! The other way! You’re going to luff.”

This was something that Phineas had not taught me to do.

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“How do you luff?” gasped I, shaking my idle sail as one shakes a balky alarm-clock to start it going.

“You *are* luffing,” responded Phineas, poling us off the eel-grass diligently with his oar. “I’ll have to show you how to jibe.”

I shall never see gay sunlight on bright blue water without remembering that day, when with Phineas to guide me I jibed and luffed busily back and forth across that little cove. I thought of the old fairy-story in which the wolf used to say to the little pigs, “I’ll huff and I’ll puff, and I’ll puff and I’ll huff, and I’ll blow your house in!” Similarly, hither and yon among the tethered sailing-craft, I puffed and I luffed.

“Now, then,” said Phineas kindly, “we’ll make a *good* tack this time. In a

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minute, put about, and steer across, using the windmill on the island as a guide.”

Cautiously I adjusted all my plans. I spread my sail as one spreads her apron for apples from a tree.

“Be firm, now,” encouraged Phineas, and around we went. Triumph! We sped across toward the windmill like a clipper ship off for the Barbados or the Spanish Main. And suddenly the wind gave one last little sigh in the sail, and died.

“It’ll spring up again,” said Phineas. “Be ready to take full advantage of the next gust. The sprits’l isn’t sensitive, you know.”

If the sprits’l was not sensitive, I was. There is a superstition as old as the sea that certain passengers bring bad luck

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on a voyage. I felt responsible for this dead calm. It seemed to me that the sprits'l was partly responsible too. I had not heard its name before, and I mentally spelled it to rhyme with pretzel. The "spretsel" was phlegmatic, a regular German sail. In placid folds it hung comfortably against the sprit, like a portière propped by a clothes-pole in somebody's back yard.

"I see plenty of wind," announced Phineas, "just outside the point. If we could only get around the sand-spit now."

"Shall we row?" I inquired tentatively.

"No," said Phineas.

I began to learn the code of the New England skipper. To resort to oars is like giving up the ship. My own lubber-

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like instinct would have been to go where the wind was, but your true mariner whistles for the wind.

Time, unlike our sailboat, flew. I began to see mirage-like views of Veronica waiting for us at the big dock, shading her eyes with her hand, perhaps, as she watched for one small tardy sail that I knew would never, never get around Shell Island by eleven.

“Phineas,” I ventured after a long period of sun-baked calm, “do you think it’s eleven yet?”

“It’s half-past,” replied Phineas briefly, with that up-to-date intelligence as to time that men acquire from long practice with the Watch Surreptitious.

“Well,” said I, “since we’re so short of wind, don’t you think *you’d* better sail us around the point?”

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“Possibly,” admitted Phineas. “You be ready to haul up the center-board if we look as if we were going to ground.”

But even Phineas could not inspire the sprits'l. We were now so near the shore, and so preternaturally still, that sandpipers came running down the beach by twos and threes to look us over. If we had had a pair of bellows aboard, I should certainly have used it to fill our sail withal. As it was, I felt like the seaman in the old story, who “wished he were in Lapland, to buy a good wind of the witches, who sell so many winds there, and so cheap.” A Lapland witch with a basket of winds to sell could have made a good thing of it that morning in our cove.

At last came a scant teaspoonful of wind, and we began to move.



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“Don’t let us graze,” cautioned Phineas.

One never gets a more detailed view of an uneven coast-line than when peering anxiously over the edge of a little craft calculating the probable clearance for a mysterious center-board. I imagined ours as fin-shaped, very deep and sharp, and the first sponge-like bed of seaweed that I sighted in our course made me haul up the center-board entirely to relieve the nervous strain. We cleared the sand-spit narrowly, so near to scraping that a little brown crab sunning himself on the bottom ran for his life and made off sidelong to his mother, like the crab in Æsop’s fables.

The teaspoonful of wind was now a skyful, with more to come. As I took the helm and grasped the sail with all

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my might by its one slim rein, I had the irreverent thought that I was holding something alive and frisky by its tail. Literary boating in "Typhoon" and "Treasure Island" prepare one in a way, but when one is scudding along with a Cape Cod wind on the quarter and a tricky sprits'l sloping toward the shore, one's sensations begin to be first-hand. There is a kind of roller-coaster motion about the waves around Shell Island that begins to be disturbing if persistently indulged. The long bask in the hot sun of the cove had not been the best preliminary for these slithering ups and downs. I hated to confess a weakness, but I knew that if I was to be disabled at the tiller I ought to give fair warning.

"Phineas," I began in a voice that

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sounded diffident and formal, "in a few minutes I may not feel quite like myself. Be ready to change seats."

My passenger gave me a searching glance. He said afterward that my face at this point was like a Zuloaga portrait done in violet and green. But he made no sign. He knew that my salvation lay in things outside myself.

"Rocks ahead," said he tersely. "Steer exactly between the bell-buoy and that gull."

Sailing orders of this kind preserve the soul from death — one's compass a surf-bell, one's star a flying gull. Close to the wind, with the blunt nose of our little cockle-shell dodging up and down the waves, I steered right onward, like Milton, and Robinson Crusoe, and Wynken, Blynken, and Nod.

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Once around the island past the rocks, the rest was plain sailing before the wind. I even made the landing at the dock, coming up to the lee of it as Phineas directed and coasting until we touched and made fast. Tossing the life-buoy up to Phineas, I clambered out and sat on the dock for a moment, swinging my feet. Below me floated our swift wild sea-fowl, tied and tamed. I was pleased to note that we had not scraped any of the gorgeous paint from the sides of the other vessels moored near by — the Periwinkle, the Sabot, Isabella, and the Viking and the Flea. Just then, out beyond the boat-house, we saw one of the boys swimming toward us, with signals of welcome and surprise. Phineas hailed him in brotherly tones, making a megaphone of his hands.

“Did Veronica wait long?” roared Phineas.

The swimmer made no answer, but came splashing toward the pier and hauled himself up beside us, presenting me with a starfish as he climbed.

“How about Veronica,” queried Phineas. “Did she get cold waiting around?”

“Oh, no,” said the swimmer calmly, “she didn’t. Veronica didn’t come. I’ll ride back in the car with you if you like.”

“What happened to Veronica?” persisted Phineas as we picked our way among the coils of rope on the pier.

“Nothing,” said Veronica’s brother, “nothing happened. She just said she guessed she wouldn’t come. She said


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I could probably ride home with you along about three this afternoon.”

He turned to look at our proud caravel bumping its nose against the barnacles on the pier.

“Veronica did *say*,” he added thoughtfully, “that she knew you and the sprits’l just a little bit too well.”

## THE PITTSBURGH OWL

HINEAS," said I at breakfast one morning soon after we arrived in Pittsburgh, "I heard an owl last night."

Phineas arranged a drop of Pennsylvania apple-butter on a bit of toast before he replied.

"Don't you think," said Phineas, "that it was a truck?"

"Do trucks hoot for half an hour from the same tree," I queried mildly, "and every now and then stop hooting to cluck?"

"The horns on trucks," observed Phineas non-committally, "often sound very much like owls. You listen critically, and see."

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A person who has heard sounds that another person has not lacks backing in an argument. We were only just in from our ride across the Alleghenies, where there had been plenty of owls hooting in the mountains as we coasted in the moonlight down the long road that Washington surveyed. Phineas and George Washington and I had heard them, and their tone-quality was fresh in my mind. Still, I was conscious that owls were improbable in the vicinity of the Negley Street Hill.

But next morning Phineas was to take a very early train, and I was getting breakfast before daybreak in the kitchenette. The Pittsburgh owl began to hoot diligently from the direction of the trees on Fifth Avenue. It was unmistakably an owl. Not a truck.



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“Phineas,” I called softly from the kitchen, “hear the owl.”

“What?” murmured Phineas, still nearly asleep.

“Hear the owl,” said I sociably. “It’s time to get up.”

“Oh,” moaned Phineas imploringly, “give me just five more minutes.”

“*I* can’t give you any minutes,” said I virtuously. “You talk as if I *kept* the minutes. You talk as if I were the agent —”

“Of the devil?” suggested Phineas in a muffled voice.

“No,” said I, still unquenched, “of the morning. You talk as if I were the Agent of Morning. *I* didn’t write the time-table. Hear the owl!”

(Great demonstration by the owl off-stage at this point. Not the rapid hoo-

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hoo-hoo of an automobile horn, but a medley of heartbroken wails with un-trucklike variations, and now and then an interval of soprano hooting interspersed with clucks.)

“Did you hear it?” I asked, taking the grapefruit to the dining-room.

“I guess so,” groaned Phineas, to pacify me.

“Well,” said I brightly, “wasn’t it a Treat?”

Later, at breakfast, I made the mistake of recapitulating.

“You *did* hear the owl,” said I, “didn’t you? It was just the same as what I heard last night.”

“Well,” said Phineas judicially, “you know it probably was a truck.”

When one has always thought of a

## THE PITTSBURGH OWL

famous city as being made up largely of smoke and cinders and the Labor Question, any little variation from the advertised normal comes as a surprise. I was perfectly delighted to find one of the most civilized and fully settled areas blossoming forth with owls.

Newcomers in Pittsburgh often spoil their own first impressions in this way — looking longingly for something that belongs properly somewhere else, and telling the old residents how unfavorably Pittsburgh compares with Santa Barbara, or Washington, or Boston-by-the-sea, or other cleanly spots. Pittsburgh takes this calmly and expects to be disliked. If you admit a sort of sneaking fondness for the busy, rumbling town, the wary old-timers cast a penetrating eye upon you, and suspect

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you of playing Glad Games, or of speaking patronizing words of cheer. This is one of the charms of the place. It has no local conceited cult, and it pretends to be nothing that it is not.

There it sits, on its strategic "Point," its three rivers bristling with industry, its bridges black with traffic, its boulevards all exceeding the speed-limit, its city fathers striving every year to keep the rate down to thirty miles an hour. When we were new in Pittsburgh, the traffic officers kept telling us to "drive faster." In Boston, we had been considered quite a reckless pair, to be narrowly watched for spurts of speed and daring. But in Pittsburgh, we found with some little indignation that we were what is locally called "road-mopes." We noticed that our Pitts-

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burgh policemen were fully equipped for business with cartridge belts around their ample waists, and so we sped along at a great rate as they told us to. We were afraid that if we did not go fast enough to suit them we might get a bullet in our rear tire. When we reported our experiences with the traffic officers to friends, they said, "Oh, yes, they have to get the traffic out of the way." That is just it. Time was when we thought of policemen as persons appointed to stop traffic. In Pittsburgh, they shoo it along.

One day a huge moving-van collided with a limousine, and an undertaker's wagon arrived ahead of the ambulance or the police. They believe in getting the most needed appliances to the spot first. The true Pittsburgh motorist also

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believes in driving on the wrong side of the road whenever the fancy seizes him; and he considers it pedantic to park on the right side of the street. When I noticed this, I gave up learning to drive. The distinction between right and left was hazy enough in my mind as it was.

But the most interesting phase of independence that we observed was the efficacy with which a flock of automobiles can enforce their wishes when for any reason they are held up. We were driving out to the Butler Plank Road one afternoon, and were held up on an unaccustomed *détour* in Sharpsburg by a long freight-train. Both ends of the freight were out of sight. There seemed to be no reason why it should ever move. A line of automobiles stretching for blocks was waiting.

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Phineas and I, with New England fatalism, composed ourselves for a long delay. But suddenly a big car in front of us spoke. The rest took up the chorus, until every machine in the neighborhood was honking at the top of its horn. A quarter of a mile of high-powered cars expressing indignation in hideous concert can do much. The freight-train parted in the middle and let us through.

Cars toot to express their opinion in all cities, to be sure, but when they try it in Boston, the police keep them waiting all the longer, for discipline. Boston believes that there is a principle involved: these spoiled petted motors of the rich need a lesson. But in Pittsburgh, where one really finds an ingrained reverence for material equipment, a Rolls-Royce and a Pierce-Arrow

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and a Packard and a Marmon coupé, all hooting in close harmony like a male quartette, can lead a chorus that will break the spirit of the most red-headed policeman west of the Alleghenies. It is a stimulating sight, if you are of those who enjoy riding over red tape. "Pittsburgh," says Phineas, "makes a dash where Boston would put a semicolon or a period."

I wish that Pittsburgh had been named Fort Pitt, after the historical stronghold there. Fort Pitt exactly suits it, with its stockade of smokestacks, its "Block House," and the barricading ramparts of its hills. And as a second choice, I should name it Saint Pittsberg, for the sake of mixing up the nationalities and creeds. But Fort Pitt is better suited to its location. When



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Washington saw it, he wrote in his journal, "I spent some time in viewing the rivers and the land on the fork, which I think extremely well situated for a fort." It still is, with its wonderful smoke-screen all around it — smoke of all colors, not even predominantly black smoke, but snow-white and ocher-yellow and strangely tinted clouds of it — some from coke, some the dust from ore, much of it not smoke at all in the strict sense, but drifting along the rivers and lingering in the valleys where the wind cannot scoop it up over the hills.

Looking down at this smoke-carnival from the top of a peak, one gets the impression that Pittsburgh is doing it on purpose, willfully puffing rings around itself out of the ground. Seen from the Aspinwall bridge at sunset, the smoke

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and the ore-dust take on the lightness of an Indian summer haze. Seen from Bigelow Boulevard in an early winter twilight, it looks like a vast saltless sea of fog, with no lighthouse to pierce it except the huge illuminated "57" of the Heinz Works, and no foghorn except the whistles of the mills.

Knowing what hard work all of this means for somebody to keep it going, one feels guilty in perceiving any beauty there. But the fact remains that the floating shadows, and the indistinctness of outlines, and the deep wide spaces in which the smoke drifts and curls, all combine to form a marvelous screen for the play of lights and colors. There are Japanese effects in delicate monotonies on winter afternoons; airy Claude Monet color-effects at dawn; Whistler

## THE PITTSBURGH OWL

bridges and blue twilights; and Turner fires on shadow at pouring time after dark. It is a study of changing mist and colors on vapor, with a background of still other layers of vapors and colors and mist. At least, this is what an eye with no housekeeping conscience might see, if social responsibility could be put to sleep. One of the steel manufacturers likes to take his friends to see one especial smoke that has a coloring which he describes as "Elsie De Wolfish"—a lovely hue of softest rose-color on a background of canary yellow and pale gray. Jusserand called Pittsburgh "the City of Magnificent Smokes."

Nobody, I think, would claim that Pittsburgh is a dainty spot; but nobody can deny that it has (as tactful persons say of a homely friend) an "interesting

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expression.” Every part of Pittsburgh has an expression of its own. One can no more expect the busy craggy sections of the city to take on the aspects of a pretty pastoral village than one would require the mastodon in the museum to preen itself like the flamingo. Pittsburgh is a mastodon, but it is a live one.

If I had a guest who had never seen the place, I would take him on a flying trip from East Liberty around the edges of Highland Park for a view of the industry on the Allegheny; then out Beechwood Boulevard, for a glimpse of the steel works on the Monongahela; then through Schenley Park, to see Panther Hollow and the four Moretti panthers on the bridge; then down the Boulevard of the Allies and around to the Point, across the river to Mount

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Washington, back again around the Block House, through the downtown district and up Bigelow Boulevard to some choice spot where I would turn my guest loose and let him explore for himself. He would certainly get lost, but this would give him a chance to learn how the Pittsburgh streets run over and under each other, in a sort of basket-weave — here and there a triple layer vertically arranged like the weave in the sides of a bird's nest — some streets a whole hill beneath the ones that cross it, with the levels of society topographically arranged. Some one should invent a collapsible contour map of Pittsburgh, made on the principle of water-wings, so that you might keep it in your pocket until needed, and then blow it up to ascertain which

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streets lead to the brinks of impassable gulches and wild crevasses, and which to great cairns and to the blank walls of vertical precipices to the top of which only the airy railway of the hair-raising "incline" can ascend.

Pittsburgh is well aware of the perils it presents to strangers, and one of the guide-books observes comfortingly, "*It is not intended to ask strangers to memorize all this. A mail-carrier and a policeman are presumed to be posted as to localities, especially the locality where met.*" Before I turn my friend loose in the city, I shall inform him that eight out of ten persons he meets will be strangers like himself, and that nothing short of a letter-carrier or a very alert small boy can be "presumed to be posted," even in the locality where met.

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I shall ask him, too, to notice just one thing: that when Pittsburgh does anything on a colossal scale, it is colossal spelled as the Germans spell it, with a K — Kolossal. And finally, I shall take him away from the contemplation of the most colossal of smokestacks, and I shall let him listen to the music of the most colossal of organ-pipes, at a Heintz recital on a Sunday afternoon, in the Carnegie Auditorium packed with men. Even at a recital, there is a vast majority of men.

For Pittsburgh is above all the most masculine place in the world. It is more masculine than a mining-camp or a logging-settlement or a whaling-ship, because in those one finds only men's rough-hewn, knockabout, haphazard makeshifts, deliberately rude; whereas

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in Pittsburgh one sees their finished products, the product wrought out by the masterful, metal-conquering type of man, masterful in the sense that Barrie and the Scotch have in mind when they say “magerfu’.”

This impression of Pittsburgh's exaggerated masculinity is strongest when you see it in two scales; first, in the magnified detailed view, as when you stand in the yard of one of the vast factories and look up at the tons of metal looming around; second, when you see it on a reduced scale, in bird's-eye view, from Mount Washington or from Herron Hill. If you gaze down upon it from one of the highest peaks, it looks like a grand collection of mechanical toys — like the playthings you might see under a little millionaire boy's



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Christmas tree. Miles and miles of toy freight-trains, thousands of miniature automobiles running along the suspension bridges like little cashboxes on a wire, toy steamboats, meccano-bridges and towers, every sort of contrivance that can make a loud noise, or run very fast, or flash a bright light, or go puff-puff. Every city has some of these, but Pittsburgh has them all. And in most cities there are more toys intended expressly for little girls. No woman could have dreamed Pittsburgh, not even a Valkyr or a Borgia or any of the Gray Norns. No woman, if consulted, would have permitted Pittsburgh. We would have told it not to leave its toys all strewn around the pretty rivers over night.

I suppose I might not like Pittsburgh

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if my work took me too near a blast-furnace, or if I had to live in some parts of Turtle Creek. But flitting through it and perching there as I have, like the Pittsburgh owl, I cannot help admiring its solid industry and its tremendous usefulness, and its huge two hundred bridges, and the hearty way it has of being openly itself. It even names some of its streets after its scientific paraphernalia: Crucible Street and Saline, Theodolite Street, Furnace Way, Collier, Bessemer, and Tripod Way. Any one would love its green locust trees, giant flowering almond-bushes, box-elders and sycamores; and the country round about with its clouds of peach-blossoms in the orchards and its big farms where one may keep a family coal-mine and oil-well along with one's

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chickens and one's bee. And there is no end to the exploring that can be done in the outlying regions where one finds places with such old-time names as Squaw Run, Moon Run, the North Star Post-Office, Ben Avon, Castle Shannon, Breakneck School, Old Plum Creek, Tomahawk, and Wind Gap.

Finally, to one who has recently been sojourning in a discreet New England college town where a delegation of citizens lately petitioned that the traffic-signs "Go Slow" should be amended to the more pleasing and grammatical phrase "Go Slowly," it is exhilarating to go whizzing around a hairpin curve just at the yawning brink of a Pittsburgh "run," and behold the following warning in large letters, succinct, uncorrected, and never, never by any

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chance obeyed — the categorical road-sign “SLO.”

I have never heard my Pittsburgh owl again. I still hope to come upon him some evening, for I have seen a wild brown cottontail rabbit on the driveway at the Bureau of Mines, and a bumblebee near the corner of Craig Street and Forbes. Moreover, a Pittsburgh friend assures me that there has always been an owl's nest in the cornice of one of the neighboring churches, and another in the trees near the Negley Street Hill. She tells me that when she was walking home from a Paderewski concert at the Mosque one night, she herself saw three little screech-owls sitting in a row in the moonlight on a telegraph wire. I reported this news in high feather to Phineas, and he does

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not suspect that I ever entertained the slightest doubts about my own beloved owl. But in view of all that I had learned about the accomplishments of the motor traffic in good old Saint Pittsburgh since we came, I confess that there were moments of horrible misgiving when I judged that my Pittsburgh owl might very possibly have been a truck.

## THE HAPPY CLAM



HE silent clam is happiest at high tide. At that time everything is coming his way. It is symbolic of the ups and down of Fate that to catch him you await a less jubilant hour, and pounce upon him in his moments of depression, far down in the Ultimate Ooze, when the tide is out. To hunt clams conveniently, one needs, I think, a steam-shovel and a harbor-dredge, and a sprig of witch-hazel with which to locate their little wells.

“You don’t *hunt* clams,” remonstrates Phineas; “you dig them.”

Phineas errs. I do not dig them, because there is only one clam-fork, and

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Phineas has it. With it he spades up the low-water sand-flats, while I crouch at his feet exploring the results of his diggings with clammy hands. I should call this hunting, though I know that when I use the term I make Phineas think of riding-habits and the baying of hounds, with a foxy clam running nimbly along a stone wall and doubling on its tracks to put the dogs off the scent. In contrast to this picture, the actual tactics of the fugitive shellfish look comparatively stationary to the Man with the Hoe. The true spirit of the hunt is appreciated only by the humble beach-comber who squats in the wake of the clam-fork at the water's edge.

I do not know what clamming would be like on such happy hunting-grounds as the historical clam-flats at Duxbury,

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where Myles Standish and the other Pilgrims made early acquaintance with the Little Necks and named them sand-gapers. I only know that the descendants of those early clams are there in numbers still, for, as I stepped cautiously along the low-water mark at sunset one evening between the Gurnet and John Alden's land, I saw their sudden fountains squirting all around me, enough bubbles to mark the presence of at least a peck of sand-gapers settled closely at my very feet. But I was not interested in clams, except historically, at the time. My first hand-to-hand experience with them was neither of a sentimental nor of a sporting nature, but dead in earnest, under difficulties, in a part of Cape Cod where the animal is rare. When you have



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blithely promised a chowder-loving house-party enough clams for supper, when you enlist your husband and a young lady guest in the enterprise, when you row your boat on an August morning hopefully to a lonely island and disembark with your basket and your sieve and three-tined tool, then you hunt beneath the disheveled fork-fuls of brackish mud with a sensation of feverish haste lest the clams should get away.

“They *can't* get away,” insisted Phineas. “Just feel for them until you find them. It’s something like feeling for eggs under a hen. Squeezing helps.”

Obediently we squeezed. A smooth oval pebble feels surprisingly like a clam, until you wash it off and perceive that it has no little neck. Pebbles

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around Shell Island are more numerous than clams. So are empty shells, and so are deceptive pairs of shells still held together in lifelike form, but packed solidly inside with mud, a kind of sculptor's model of some ancestral clam. We soon found that clamming in a sparsely settled region is properly a two-man job — one person to ply the clam-fork, and one to hunt. A third person only crowds the field. Our guest was an expert huntress, suiting well the mood of Phineas, following the clam-fork with that inspired adaptability with which a skillful dancer allows a man to "lead." I myself, on the contrary, work best when unpartnered and unobserved. It occurred to me that clams might possibly be unearthed in a more individual and primitive way,

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and I looked about for something that might serve as a sort of drill. In the rifts of whitening seaweed high on the beach I found a piece of wreckage that would do. Inland I should have called it a sharp stick, but in this marine setting it became a spar.

“I will take this spar,” said I to Phineas, “and while you and Electra dig around the cove, I will hunt along the point.”

They gave me the impersonal and abstracted nod of two artists perfectly absorbed, and I went out a little way along the sand-spit, found a fresh patch of promising bubbles, and began to drill. I tried to feel appropriately nautical, but in spite of myself I felt like a gardener tunneling for moles, or a prospector hunting pay-dirt. If I could

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only strike a vein of clams, as a miner strikes a vein of gold! But these clams did not arrange themselves in veins. They were hermit clams, maintaining a cool distance from one another of at least a dozen yards. A bubble that looked hopeful might possibly indicate a clam, but then again it might be only the settling of the foam from the wash of the last high wave.

A spar is less comprehensive than a clam-fork. Damp sand is a heavy medium in which to bore with a well-sunned pike of salt-cured wood. Nearly an hour of steady industry went by. I had cut up the coast considerably from the base to the tip of the point, and had run only eleven clams from cover, when I heard a far-away shout from Phineas and a trill from Electra. I

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turned and waved to them, mere marionettes of slender animation in the distance. Electra was signaling expressively with her basket and sieve. In pantomime she indicated the level of the clams — basket two thirds full, sieve full to overflowing; and she managed to convey to me the fact that she was standing on the site of a thickly settled clam-city, to the freedom of which I was officially invited if I cared to come. Much may be said through the medium of the interpretive dance, and I cordially wig-wagged my joy. But the other side of my peninsula was very breezy, and the blue tide was beginning to turn. My anxiety as a provider and contractor was at an end, and my zeal as a hunter was past its peak. I knew that Phineas and Electra, spurred on by

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the plenty around them, would go on digging from sheer momentum for some time; but the chowder was safe and my spar was getting blunt. So I piled my eleven clams in a careful pyramid, as Jacob set up a heap of stones to mark the place of Mizpah, and I covered them with seaweed and drove my spar upright like a beacon in the sand near by. Then I withdrew to the outer edge of the point, and rested scripturally in the shadow of a great rock.

Turning tide on a pebbly beach makes an irregular sound, an alternation of conventional snoring rhythm and unexpected pause. There is now and then an interval of surprising silence, like a deep breath held unnaturally, followed by a subdued rush and a long roar as the next big lazy wave curls

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in and rolls back across the stones. I have pleasant associations with that sound: a slanting beach on the edge of Connecticut, where patches of blue vetch and dusty miller grew near the ledges and the meadow-larks whistled all day; a rocky island outside Boothbay Harbor off the coast of Maine, with fir-trees hanging their branches almost down to the surf, and fishermen's dories putting out at dawn; a cottage on the tip of a New Hampshire bluff, where we watched seven lighthouses and many stars as they lit their lamps in the gradual darkness one by one; Marblehead, where we sat near the Churn and saw a casual racing-sloop go by; the sand-dunes between Provincetown and Truro in a winter storm, their wave-like crests white in the flying snow; Highland

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Light in the fog; and Watch Hill in an afternoon breeze with a brown wharf-rat sunning himself on a barnacled rock. The seashores of New England have vigorous coast-lines and vigorous names: Nahant and Niantic and Juniper Point, Rye and Chatham and Gay Head. Along the uneven beaches of them all, the tide comes in over stones enough to make that peculiar shuffling thunder, with its mysterious hesitant silences when the waves run out and gather force for the next incoming swell.

The turn of tide is the best time to pause and rest and forget the smallness of one's little heap of clams.

The waves had washed a glistening ruffle of brown kelp almost up to my rock when I heard my colleagues coming. I sat up and watched them as they



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picked their sure-footed way over the tumbled stones. They had left their clams at the boat, and Phineas had the generous lunch-box under his arm.

“Aren’t you starved?” inquired Electra, presenting me with a little bush of ripe blueberries that she had gathered on the way.

“Let’s have lunch in the woods,” said Phineas. “Where are your clams?”

“I bedded them down with wet seaweed,” said I in a careless, professional tone. “They’ll be safe.”

“We’ll get them on our way back,” agreed Phineas. “Then we can use the lunch-box to carry them in. It’ll hold them, won’t it?”

“Yes,” said I truthfully, “it will.”

We climbed a stony slope, over a creeping tangle of flat vines where pink

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morning-glories had opened wide in the warm sun. I have never decided which is more dainty—the pale thin rose-color of the open blossoms or the exquisite shadows cast by their small trumpets and tendrils and twisted buds on the surface of gray rocks. The blossoms and shadows were both stirring airily in the wind, but we did not pause to watch them. The shadow of the pine-grove was more to our purpose than the shadow of a morning-glory flower just then.

Under old scrub pine-trees on a coast-wise island, the deposit of pine-needles is soft and deep and very lightly packed. The surface feels springy beneath the hand. As we camped for lunch in the deepest part of the cool grove, we had a sense of perfect Original Comfort and of great remoteness from the world. Even

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the sound of the waves seemed to come from immeasurable distances, the mere echo of surf on reaches very far away. We took our ease there until it was time to go down to find the boat again, gathering up my hand-picked collection of eleven choice clams as we went along. Putting out in our little boat and voyaging around the lighthouse into the small Cape harbor, with our catch of clams carefully disposed about our feet, we felt as useful as a schooner with a cargo of sea-food in her hold.

There is a quiet town near the very tip of Cape Cod where for many generations they have annually held elections at Town Meeting, keeping most of the original offices and titles quite unchanged. Two of those old-time officers still extant are the Fence-Viewer and

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the Clam Warden. I do not know just what their duties are. But I have always thought that if I might some day be elected to hold office in any town, I should choose to be a Clam Warden on Cape Cod. I would not dig the clams, or hunt them from their coverts, or profiteer in any way at all. I would only patrol their premises at low tide, and see how they were getting on. And at high tide, I think that I would perch with my friend the Fence-Viewer on some windy dune, and see the waves come in, knowing that at that hour my wards would be in their most prosperous and blissful mood. I would be the one placid ruler in this era of unrest — the tranquil governor of peaceful sand-flats, miles and miles of contentment as far as eye could reach, all populous with my tide-swept colonies of Happy Clams.

## THE LASTING THINGS



WE may be very progressive, but we do like our own ways. Between the ages of twenty and sixty our dread of getting into a rut has power to keep us uneasy; but, even during those critical years, our own ways hardly seem to us like ruts. A rut is generally a groove made by the wheels of others. We are glad to think that the paths we have blazed are a little aside from the main-traveled road.

Traced through a lifetime, traced through the generations, these private ways of ours would be found to mark the regions where individuality is most pronounced, where the historical back-

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ground is most charming, where we have the most memorable encounters with our friends.

They mark, also, the regions where we form the most memorable customs with our relatives. In a family made up of resourceful people, with ways that sometimes coincide and sometimes intersect, the chances for comradeship and the chances for collision are about even. From the resulting combination of accepted and contested modes of procedure, the permanent family tradition is made up.

The most distinctive customs in household life are likely to gather around very simple things, especially five great subjects of debate: furniture, the entertainment of company, supervised attention, the automobile, and the

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food-supply. Nobody deliberately sets out to establish rituals in connection with these things; but years afterward the accidental associations come to have a significance of their own.

Furniture, for example, is a matter of genuine idealism with most householders. We intend to accumulate only things worth owning — the fine, durable things that can be handed down with unimpaired dignity through the generations. With adequate funds and trained judgment, this ideal can be approached. But when the average family is developing within financial limitations, certain articles of furniture that are not representative are bound to creep in. And if this goes on through a period of years, the final accumulation is not homogeneous.

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In the most comfortable of homes, therefore, we find things in which nobody takes much artistic pride. As "period furniture" these pieces are not a success, for they are not purely of any recognized type, not even Early- or Mid-Victorian. If anything, they are Early McKinley or Mid-Ulysses Grant. In spite of excellent reasons for keeping these objects, the owners are quite aware of the inharmonious note. Those members of the family who, like Mrs. Gummidge, *feel* it more than the rest, are continually suggesting new locations for the offending articles, maneuvering to get them into inconspicuous positions. But you cannot hope to obscure such things entirely. The more you try to suppress them, the more they prey upon the mind. Some profounder, more



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penetrating Freud ought to investigate the effect of suppressed furniture upon the inner life of the home.

Those who find themselves in possession of such things have a baffled feeling. Their ideals were dignified, but their success was uneven. Yet, if they wait long enough, they will find that it is not exclusively the old mahogany that is carefully cherished by the younger generation. The memory of the stuffed sofa over the back of which we fished for trout, and of the unsteady little pine tea-table where we used to find the cookypail, can assume a value in our later thought quite equal to that of the ancestral highboy.

A famous logician has said that furniture is divided into two classes: furniture made to hold people, and furniture

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made to hold things. But within these two great logical divisions there is a peculiar extra class — furniture made to hold memories. Leaving out of the account such poetic examples as the trundle-bed and the settle by the fire, we can all of us think of articles that have formed, not only the social center of the group, but also the center of discussion.

In one household, this kind of furniture is represented by a chair where the lower part is stationary and the upper part rocks. Every one knows this kind of chair — the kind where the top has a curved solid-wood foundation that rocks on a stationary base, the whole thing held together by springs, if I make myself clear. The English language is curiously inadequate to a description of

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this patent rocking-chair. But the man who owns one knows that, as you seat yourself in it, you are likely to take a backward swoop, very startling, indeed, if you are new to the manner. Since the foundation is firm, you do not really fall; you simply go through the preliminaries without the crash.

Suppose that, for some unaccountable reason, this happens to be somebody's favorite chair — what can you do about it? The sensitive members of the family, deploring, not only its manners, but the way it is upholstered, do their best to retire it to a cranny. But since, when it rocks backward, it blemishes the wall behind it and bumps annoyingly, the comfort-loving classes keep dragging it out again as fast as it is set away. This breeds dissension.

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And any inanimate object that can out-ride the gales of household strife is perfectly sure of an eternal place in our memories. Whether we attacked it or defended it, we remember it.

An entirely different variety of hotly discussed furniture is the sort, not ugly in itself, but by nature untidy. Some pieces of furniture seem made to hold more things than others. There are tables that are positive magnets. They attract the entire deposit of the day. You may put such a table in perfect order in the morning, and by night it will be completely hidden beneath an accumulation of newspapers, notions, and small wares. In the same way, certain backs of chairs form natural hanging-places for caps and book-straps and shopping-bags. "Have you looked on

the back of the Morris chair?" —  
"Have you looked on the hall table?"  
Magnetic furniture governs not only the domestic trade-routes and thoroughfares and the line of traffic from room to room: it governs also the line of argument when things are lost and not found.

Sometimes it is not a single bit of furniture, but a whole room, that must be suppressed. In one house, this room is the "plaything-closet"; in another, it is the "cubby-hole" — a cache for rubber overshoes, dry-mops, and hockey-sticks; in another, it is the boys' room, a sort of Tramps' Paradise, where the boys keep their dynamo and all their odds and ends. The doors of such places have a universal tendency to stand ajar. As you ring the doorbell of certain

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pleasant homes, you hear the careful closing of doors before your ring is answered. I like to think that this is the gentle shutting of plaything-closets and cubby-holes.

Besides suppressed furniture, there is now and then an article that one member of the family holds sacred, offering no rational explanation, but announcing that this particular treasure of his soul shall be let alone. A certain small boy once gave out simple orders that nobody was to touch his box of matches or go anywhere near the Bible on his dressing-table. His mother understood about the Bible. Her little son, she knew, was not devout, but he was a man of his word, and he had promised to read the Bible every day for a year. The book-mark that he kept

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in it must not be disturbed, for, if he lost his place, his methodical habit was to go back and begin at the first chapter of Genesis again. He had done this already three times, and his mother could perfectly understand that he was anxious to forge ahead. The only thing that she wondered about was the match-box. There was an electric light beside his little desk, and the matches at the bedside seemed superfluous. Therefore when she dusted, she left the matches sometimes in one place and sometimes in another, not at all appreciating his rage when he could not put his hand on them in the dark.

But one night, as she went past his door, she saw the flare of a match in the pitchy blackness of his room. She paused, fascinated, and looked in.

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There he sat in bed, Bible in one hand, match in the other, reading while the match held out to burn. It is astonishing what an amount of Holy Writ you can absorb before the flame creeps quite up to your thumb. He explained, somewhat impatiently, that he had to turn out his desk-light before he could raise the curtains and open the windows, didn't he? and he had to read the Bible, didn't he, after he was in bed?

Small boys and grown men are rivals in unmanageableness when any variation from the normal is attempted in honor of guests. One small boy named Gordon was a sample of the cave-man type.

“Now,” said Gordon's mother to Gordon one afternoon before the company arrived, “to-night we are going



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to use some of the very best china, and you mustn't make any surprised remarks."

Gordon agreed to comply with this convention, and obeyed to the letter all through the pleasant meal, but he followed with his eye a certain beautiful Chinese bowl. It came on in the first place filled with mushroom-gravy. At the salad course it came on again filled with mayonnaise. And finally it was passed around full of chocolate fudge-sauce for the ice-cream. As the pretty thing appeared for the third time, Gordon remarked happily,

"*Popular little bowl.*"

Another hospitable hostess had trained her family not to ask for second helpings. If she wished them to accept such, she told them she would inquire,

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“Will you have some pudding?” If she said “*Will* you?” they might answer, “Yes, I will.” But if she said “*Won’t* you have some?” the answer was, “No, thanks, I *won’t*.”

One evening when company came unexpectedly, the cream-supply was low, and she inquired politely of her husband, “*Won’t* you have some cream in your coffee?”

Taken by surprise, he knew vaguely that there was some occult meaning lurking in that remark, but the code had slipped his mind, and he said, genially, “Why, let me see, let me see! Yes, I will — *won’t* I?” and then retracted it hastily in great mental disarray.

“I will, *won’t* I?” became in that family a recognized signal of social uncertainty.

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In another animated home, there is a traditional byword used to quell any persistent attempt to supervise the attention of the clan. The mother and father of this family were off on a foreign tour one vacation-time, enjoying that most heavenly of excursions, the holiday journey of a man and wife who have successfully brought up their children, taken their part in community life, and can now enjoy their rare leave of absence with keen wits and a clear conscience. They have a right to the feeling of well-earned relaxation that President Lincoln used to enjoy when he repeated the poem,

“How pleasant is Saturday night  
When you’ve tried all the week to be good.”

On this particular evening they were hurrying along a foreign boulevard, a

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little late for an appointment with friends. One of the husband's minor traits was a grand disregard of time, together with a genial habit of pausing at every turn to point out things for his wife to admire, as if the world were his country-seat and she were in it only as his protégée and guest. The most able husbands of the most gifted wives are most wedded to this trait. The object of attention this evening was Luna moths. High up around each arc-light great numbers of large-winged pale-colored moths were dancing and circling at the verge of the surrounding shadows. It was a lovely sight, and one that no good husband would wish his wife to overlook. At every light he paused, to let her look at the moths. His wife was that type of capable woman who can

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take in an exquisite and tranquil scene at a glance, with swift appreciation, as she hastens past. But it is hard to convince a husband that you have really looked at his moth-exhibit unless you pause and let him display it in detail.

Under three lights, they had thoroughly investigated the moths. But, as they drew up under the fourth light, decisive measures were in order. "Just look at them!" urged the husband raising his hand and tracing the flight of the moths through the air. "Do see how they circle about! Notice how they spiral and turn! See how that one weaves in and out! See how they wheel and wheel!"

At this point, he looked down for his wife's response, and discovered that she had stepped briskly along without him

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and was nearly a block away, while a foreign gentleman had paused on the curb to watch his own performances with some amazement and concern. In one simple act his wife had expressed the resolute spirit of reform, with the prompt efficiency of the happily married but not personally conducted soul. When any one in their home tries too insistently to call attention to the beauties of the world, the rest need only murmur, "See how they wheel and wheel!"

But the management of the company manners and the attention of a household is as nothing compared to the management of the automobile. The automobile is so modern that one does not think naturally of tradition in connection with it; but when you are in one,

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you can establish a custom in a twinkling.

Every family quickly establishes well-defined relations between the driver and the group. Persons on the back seat of a touring-car are tempted to shout directions to the driver, particularly if he is a relative. This would be well enough if the directions were given in time, and if they were succinct, final, and from one source. But when several of the party lean forward just after they have passed the place where they wished to turn or stop, and then halloo conflicting suggestions against the wind, the fiber of the family tie is tested.

Drivers react to this according to their temperament. The highly disciplined son and brother responds like a sensitive instrument. He swerves the

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car lightly hither and yon at the cross-roads, turning an impossible corner when a shout from the rear demands it, and instantly making another swoop in the opposite direction when the order is countermanded. By the curve of the car he accurately registers the caprice of the tonneau. Many sons and brothers can make a car cut a perfect figure eight to order without accident, but few can do it without remark.

A very different type of young man goes to the other extreme, and pays no attention at all to any one who tries to alter his plans or to regulate his speed. Bracing resolute shoulders, he spins along, deaf to the cries of his passengers.

And there is now and then a driver,



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perhaps the father of the family, who, instead of being merely obedient or disobedient, is diplomatic. If there is an argument as to route, he stops the car, leans a kindly arm along the back of the seat, and turns around to talk things over. He does not start again until a satisfactory group-decision has been reached. This saves wear and tear on the car.

With the automobile, too, comes the question whether or not to put up the curtains when it begins to rain — a subject too painful for more than mention here. And you can take the complete measure of a family's growth in grace when it comes time to select a spot by the roadside where they can all agree to eat the picnic lunch. All hands on the lookout, they skim along the country

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road, everybody pointing out perfect spots, which somebody else vetoes on account of mosquitoes, or cows, or poison ivy. That family is fortunate that has already settled upon ideal picnic grounds on every highway — places where they always stop for luncheon without debate.

One likes to have established modes of procedure in connection with one's food-supply.

The most interesting example of the way in which traditions gather around the most informal of meals is the Sunday-night supper. This is the most flexible of all national events. There is no social code to govern it. Each family celebrates it in its own way. Yet nearly everybody has definite ideas as to how this meal should be managed. Some

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families, like the Children of Israel, eat standing. This saves dishes. In other homes, Sunday night is the favorite time for guests, and the meal is more or less elaborate. Some people have brown bread and milk for supper, some have popcorn and cocoa, some have Welsh rabbit. Then there is the great school of foraging, the teachings of which permit every man to raid the larder for what he wants. The maid is out, and it is the open season for hunting in the refrigerator.

In homes where this last practice is in vogue, the supper-hour is variable. Some time after dark, the family, two or three at a time, begin to drift toward the kitchen. Somebody opens the refrigerator door and goes down on one knee for a survey. The others gather

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behind him and look over his shoulder at the rows of dishes sitting in the arctic twilight of the shelves. Then one dish after another is called for and handed out, as each announces his choice. Everything is open for selection, except one.

And here is the moment for an almost national debate, carried on perennially, with one side always winning. Shall or shall not the Sunday chicken be eaten cold on Sunday night? Every frugal housewife in the land upholds the negative: resolved, that it shall not. There sits the chicken, in plain sight, delectable. To-morrow it will be only our Monday dinner. To-night is its divine moment. But in most homes, the tradition is inflexible, though upheld by only one single personality. Except for a

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criminal morsel snatched under cover of the excitement, the chicken remains undiminished. On this one point, the mildest lady in the land stands firm.

The most memorable phase of Sunday-night supper will vary with individual experience. Sometimes a prosaic moment becomes hallowed by time, as it has in one home where the true spirit of the occasion is always most charming when the times come for washing the dishes.

The whole household on this one night joins in the process. The son of the family, who normally sojourns very little in kitchens, is provided with a tea-towel, and stands immovable, polishing conscientiously. Conversation flourishes as he vigorously rubs a single bread-and-butter plate endlessly round

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and round. He thinks of a tea-towel, not merely as an instrument for drying moisture, but as a kind of buffer. Still, it is a great thing to have him there, though he does monopolize a dry towel that might otherwise be put to use. His sisters dart about, snatching cups and plates from under his elbow at the right, drying them as they run around him, and depositing them at his left.

Meanwhile his father, also conversational, leans against one of the doors of the china-closet, choosing by instinct the door that bars the way to the place where the next pile of saucers must go. Requested to move, he springs aside with alacrity to a post in front of the shelf that is the destination of the incoming plates.

Just why it should be so thrilling, on

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this one night of the week, to have two gentlemen of doubtful serviceableness in the kitchen, is a question that might be puzzling to explain in terms. But it is nevertheless one of the great settled questions of that house.

No matter how commonplace the origin, any simple, unvarying custom, followed for a long time, gathers power to stir the imagination. This is particularly true of the things that older people do with children. There are men and women who are artists in this matter of establishing beautiful customs that children love and remember all their lives.

A certain busy father, not generally known as an artist, had this knack with his children. On summer evenings, just after their early supper, he established

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a habit of “going to Bermuda.” In plain set prose-language, this was a habit of breathing the sweet out-of-door air before their bedtime, but Bermuda was the destination, and the back verandah was the ship. A row of deck-chairs was ranged beside the rail. The deck-steward (their father) tucked each small passenger in with a steamer-rug. The green rolling lawn was the waves; the distant sky with a telegraph-wire across it was the offing — and their mother read aloud to them some story of travel or adventure as the good ship voyaged along. Those children are all grown up now, but they have kept that custom in their homes, though some of them have gone to places more distant than the Bermuda of their dreams. And whenever two or three of them come



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home, with their families, perhaps, they always go to Bermuda on pleasant evenings, on the original deck, in their favorite steamer-chairs.

Such early customs have a way of assuming symbolic value in our maturer thought. They are reassuring in moments of insecurity — a steadying element. If it is true that an unfortunate event or terror in childhood can make so deep an impression as later to undermine the mental health, surely it is not making too extravagant a claim to suggest that an exquisite or humorous or gracious moment may serve later as a powerful force for sanity.

Each of us will recall such early significant moments from our own experience. One of my own most perfect childhood memories concerns my visits

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to my grandmother, when she invited me to stay for supper, and my grandfather walked home with me after dark. All along the way, he used to point out our two shadows on the pavement, as we passed the street-lights one by one. We watched the way the shadows were very short directly below the lamp, and how they lengthened until they were just our height — his more than twice as tall as mine — and how they finally grew so long that their tops were almost out of sight. The object was to find the point where the shadows were exactly as tall as ourselves. When we came to the darkest part of the street, where our shadows were lost in the hedges, we used to stop and find the North Star over a pointed tree near my own home.

That was always the way we made

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the journey from his home to mine, until he thought that I was too old to care to have him show me stars and shadows any more. But for me, as long as I live, the North Star will shine over that particular tree. And I shall always keep the memory of that funny little shadow that used to be mine, clear-cut with the light behind it, — and beside it, hand in hand with it, that dear characteristic shadow that never falls now on any road in the world.

We make something that lasts a good while when we make a custom.

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**P**HINEAS and I were invited out to dinner, and it was high time that we were on our way. We both had our coats on ready to start, but Phineas, unseasonably inspired with a fever of pressing industry, was hurrying busily about, sorting his documents and memoranda as if this hour were to be his last on earth.

At such moments, a punctual wife has no means of coercion save only words, but I was making the most of those. As Phineas sped from room to room and from desk to filing-cabinet, I followed closely, like a pilot-fish in the shadow of a whale, only I was more vol-

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uble than any fish. At last, seeing that my remarks were having no effect except to electrify the air, I exclaimed desperately, "Oh, Phineas, don't you wish that I were dead?"

"No," rejoined Phineas pleasantly, "I only wish that you were etherized."

One observes a fine distinction here, though I lacked leisure to appreciate it at the time. There are crises in marital discussion that are not matters of life and death; episodes that make one wish, not for the executioner, but simply for an intermission.

The attempt to make any sage remarks, however cautious, about the mutual life of couples, leaves one with the sensation that must have come over a certain pet kitten who once strayed

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casually into a kitchenette. The kitten was the spoiled favorite of a group of college girls who were about to serve a clam-chowder to some of their inland friends. The kettle of chowder had been set for a moment on a low shelf, but one of the girls, fearing that the kettle might tempt the kitten, poured out the chowder into a tureen, put the tureen in the oven to keep warm, and set the empty kettle back on the low shelf. Presently another girl came into the kitchenette, and there found the tiny kitten, which was approximately the size of a tennis ball, running around inside the empty kettle, busily lapping up the last drops. "Oh!" cried the student, balancing the little cat cautiously on her hand at arm's length, "this kitten has eaten up four quarts of clams!"

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The guests who came flocking to the scene must have observed a modest glance of apology in that kitten's eye. The fact that one is found running around in a great subject is no sign that one has absorbed it all.

At the time when the problem-novel was at the height of its vogue, there was an interesting young novelist who took himself quite seriously in the echoing recesses of that kettle, advertising marriage in general to be a cramped and empty state, which must, after the first little while, be disappointing on the whole. The plots of his stories turned on the idea that marriage is largely a matter of disillusion and dull thud, having much in common with air-castles that collapse, bubbles that burst, sky-rockets that turn into sticks. In unoffi-

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cial life he himself was a hard-working bachelor, the devoted slave of a charming mother. Although his published works were full of the most hair-raising accounts of connubial strife, his own combats were limited to the mild debates that he used to conduct on the walking-trips of our Saturday afternoon Tramp and Lunch Club.

“The whole trouble with married couples,” he announced grimly one afternoon as the Club was about to cook a camp-supper on a rocky hilltop, “is selfishness.”

There were three married couples present: Horatio the lawyer and Dorothy his wife, Alexander the architect and his wife Sue, and a college professor who had recently married my friend Veronica. We had walked out to Hora-



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tio's summer camp, where we kept our picnic dishes in a big zinc-lined locker that the brides of the party had frivolously named the Hope Chest. Phineas had come with us for the first time that day, admitted to the Club, *ex officio*, by virtue of being Veronica's brother and Horatio's guest. I had never seen Phineas before, and we all watched him with considerable curiosity as he prepared his contribution to the picnic supper — a savory vegetable stew that he had invented in his mountaineering days in Colorado. The stew, he warned us, was not succotash, but *x*-otash; *x* being the unknown quantity. I noticed that Phineas, flourishing his long iron spoon, listened with great attention to all that the novelist had to say.

“Selfishness is the main trouble,”

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continued our literary lion, "and illusion is another. This morning I saw a department-store advertisement of 'Bridal Illusion by the Yard.' Brides and grooms expect the illusion to last. They might know that anything as extreme as a love-affair has to have an anticlimax."

"That's all right in a story," objected Alexander, "but in real life it's queer how much more interesting married life gets as you go along. Love's quite resilient. I think the sort of trouble that leads to divorce would have made the same couple miserable if neither of them had ever married at all. No stamina."

"It's usually money," said the professor. "Either too little or else too much."

"It's irritation at little things," in-

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sisted Dorothy. "A wife can be perfectly furious at the trick a man has of throwing papers and pencil-sharpenings and those tiny black laundry-studs on the floor, and then saying that he *threw* them into the waste-basket and they bounced out again." Dorothy looked darkly at Horatio, who beamed ingratiatingly at her. "The little irritations pile up, and then, when something important comes along, your state of mind is ready for a grand fight."

"It's deeper than that," contributed Sue, skillfully opening the olives. "Moral principles don't stand a chance nowadays if emotion gets in the way."

"People eat too much," observed the lawyer dreamily. "It's a very prolific root of evil."

"Everything so far," concluded the

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novelist, “comes under the head of selfishness. So does jealousy. So do all the crimes.”

There was a pause at this point, while the *x*-otash bubbled and the camp-fire flickered against the October sunset. The breeze blew the light smoke away over the deep valley, and far below us a procession of crows flapped slowly over the fields toward the Blue Hills. I was making the coffee by a method of my own over a tricky canned-alcohol flame, but I had leisure for just one thought: here were we, a healthy crew, making easy decisions about the fine points of married misery. Here was a literary bachelor, analyzing marriage. Here were three happy couples, discussing divorce. As the only unmarried woman in the

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Club at the time, I decided to throw a bomb.

“I’ve been writing anonymous reviews of problem-novels in my spare minutes all this week,” I remarked peacefully, “and you ought to see the inside of my mind. I’m a walking textbook on the Pathology of Marriage. The only question *I* feel like asking married couples is, how do they stand it?”

“Why!” protested Horatio, bristling up, “everybody knows it’s the only satisfactory way to live.”

“Marriage is the normal thing, dear,” added Dorothy kindly to me.

“You don’t know what you miss,” said Alexander. “Just wait till the right —”

“Alexander,” I interrupted placidly,

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“you ought to see my reviews. You haven’t answered my question.”

“I’ll tell you,” began the professor suddenly. “In books and in conversation it’s easy enough to deal with the causes for unhappiness, because they are definite and readily grasped by the imagination, like all bad things. You can isolate grievances in marriage, just as you can isolate bacteria, or teach a sick child to ‘point to the pain.’ But you can’t isolate the causes of energy and happiness. You can’t put your hand on your general health.”

“In stories and novels,” said Veronica thoughtfully, “the married couples hardly ever have any work to do. If the author does give them work, he uses it as one of the elements that divide them. In real life, most husbands and wives

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are too busy to spend much time in brooding on whether they are happy or not. They meet each other at the end of a crowded day with a feeling of blessed relief, the way you feel when you happen to get your own favorite partner back when the dance has been a Paul Jones.”

“But suppose you change your mind about your favorite partner,” suggested the novelist shrewdly, “and have to keep the wrong one for life with no Paul Jones to break the monotony? There’s where the plot comes in.”

At this point, Phineas was observed to peer into his kettle, remove it carefully from the crane, cover it securely, and set it in a nest of dry leaves to keep hot. The coals of the camp-fire were ready for the chops. Each of us brand-

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ishing a pointed stick, we dropped the subject of marriage, and every one awoke to the atmosphere of culinary cheer.

As I watched those three lively couples with their obvious companionableness, I reflected that, as long as such pleasant human beings were abroad in the world, few would be seriously deterred from marriage by the novelist's neat theory of anticlimax and Disillusion by the Yard. The only point at which the theory seems able to do damage is in its influence upon the thinking of the married pair. When a sudden moment of annoyance comes, when they see the first baleful glance cast upon them by the adored one's eyes, then they think, "Oh, yes! This is what we might have expected, what we had



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seen foretold. The love that seemed so eternal, where is it now?"

At this point, a highstrung woman and a spirited man, both well-read and properly versed in plot-construction, can coast downhill into a first-class tragedy in two minutes, or less. Once in the depths, they feel that they can never rise to the upper levels any more.

Probably they could not, in a story, where every episode in the plot must count. But in real life, where a dramatic episode need not be followed out to its logical limits unless we choose, a situation of this kind can lead, not to downward action and spiritual estrangement, but to onward action and spiritual acquaintanceship. The process of mutual adjustment with the right partner is not a poor patching-up of an idol

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that has fallen from its shelf. It is progressive, individual, like the busy daily life of two explorers on a new planet — a planet without charts or geography because it is their own, full of surprises and broad horizons, unreported by any scouts, only dimly rumored by the poets. They are at perfect liberty to name their planet for the great god Mars, and skirmish there as briskly as they choose. Their congeniality may have its ups and downs, perhaps. But it is not limited to one up and one down, like a plot or a rocket. It may have many, like the tide.

One can only guess and shrewdly conjecture about this: for the individual couple, taken by itself, is forever a mysterious entity, rarely to be studied except in combination with the group.

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The sweeping plot-theory of married life needs exploding. So does the theory that love fades into liking. If love fades, it is far more likely to fade into something else. Liking is not the inferior residue of love. Liking is love's supplement, not its substitute. It adds entertainment and diversity to love's peace.

But though every theory is inadequate, I suppose that, if one is to think about the experience of married couples at all, one must evolve a tentative theory of one's own. Not long ago I asked Phineas if he had one.

Phineas was selecting logs from the woodbox to start a fire, and he delayed the process long enough, I think, to invent the substance of his reply. Then he said that companionship in marriage

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seemed to him like algebra, not the arithmetical addition of two persons, like adding  $a$  to  $b$ , but like the algebraic squaring of  $a + b$ . And the square of  $a + b$ , Phineas hoped I had not forgotten from high-school days, was not simply  $a^2 + b^2$ , but something more:  $a^2 + 2ab + b^2$ . This additional “ $+ 2ab$ ,” he said, was in his mind the symbol for the extra inspiration and impetus and positive experience that a couple gains through their married life.

The comparison that I had thought of myself was based on an innovation that I unintentionally introduced into our own marriage ceremony. The service was well under way, approaching those strangely assorted words, “reverently, discreetly, advisedly . . .” Nothing up to that point had unsteadied me, but

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the exquisite thrill of the ancient wording was too much: “reverently, discreetly, advisedly, and in the fear of God.” I knew that if I were to emerge clear-eyed and dapper at the end of the ceremony I must think of something else. So I thought desperately about the most humble and comfortable object that I could call to mind, the little box of kitchen things that I had packed in the automobile — things to use in the cooking that I was to do at the tiny seashore cottage where we were going on our wedding trip. The package contained numerous smaller boxes, each filled with some condiment of which a versatile cook needs now a teaspoonful, now a pinch. There was cinnamon for toast, corn-meal for frying fish, paprika for the salad — and to keep my mind

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from the too exalted loveliness of the marriage service, I repeated to myself rapidly over and over the names on the covers of the little boxes. The list went with the rhythm of a strange heathen incantation:

Salt, soda, cream of tartar,  
Cinnamon, paprika, kitchen bouquet,  
Mustard, nutmeg, baking-powder,  
Corn-starch, pepper, celery-salt,  
Corn-meal for —

It sounds inapropos. But I cannot help thinking that perhaps the Lord accepted it as an adequate marriage prayer. To me, the most reassuring element in marriage is this mingling of homely detail with romantic loveliness; the blending of the exaltation of high heaven along with corn-meal, paprika, and a dash of kitchen bouquet.

For a comparison that goes farther

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and has been tested longer, I would turn back to the experience of a bride in the generation just ahead of mine, who selected one of her favorite childhood toys to take with her as a keepsake into her new home. The toy was an old-fashioned china hen that had once been a candy-box, made hollow, sitting on a yellow china nest. After the wedding, the young housewife tucked the hen away in the corner of a shelf in the bookcase in her room, and used it as a place for storing extra keys. At first there were only half a dozen keys: the duplicate key to the bridegroom's office, the extra key to the back door, and the keys to storeroom and trunks. But as years went on, the little hen sat on an increasing collection of various keys, all tagged and labeled carefully, with the

most recent ones on top. All the children of that home knew that, if they lost a key, the duplicate was always inside the china hen, and that their mother could find it on demand.

One afternoon, when she was away, however, her husband came home to get ready for an unexpected business trip, and went to the attic to see if his steamer-trunk was there. Both his wife's steamer-trunk and his own, he knew, were likely to be missing, because the children had a way of borrowing them for their overflow baggage and then forgetting to send them home again. True to form, his wife's steamer-trunk had departed from its storage-nook, but his own was there. He took it down and packed it, and then he could not find the key. After a prolonged



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search he remembered that his wife might possibly have the duplicate in her cabinet upstairs.

For the first time in his life, he personally interviewed the china hen. There it sat in the cabinet, perched on a heaping mound of tags and keys, gazing at him sidelong out of one red china eye. He took the faithful bird carefully off the nest, and poured the keys out on to a desk near by. Then he began to examine them one by one. At first casually, then with growing interest, he read the writing on the tags. There was the key to his old office, abandoned twenty years since. There was the key to the summer cottage where they used to spend vacations when the children were small. Next came the tiny key that unlocked the silver heart on a little girl's

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bracelet long ago. Then he found his safety-deposit keys, and the keys of other deposit-boxes, the property of elderly relatives whose business errands his wife had always had in charge. One key, tagged with a bit of hemp string, had fastened the home-made packing-box that used to go in summer to a boys' camp in the woods. Another belonged to a violin case, another to the boat-house at the farm. There was the khaki-tagged key to an overseas army-trunk, and even the little key that once unlocked the padlock on a certain small black spaniel's collar years ago. Each was labeled in the familiar handwriting, with now and then a special memorandum on the tag. It was like reading the shorthand jottings of the whole of married life.

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At last he found what he had come to look for — a small blunt key with a pennant-shaped label attached, on which he read the hastily-written inscription,

“Key to Endicott’s steamer-trunk —  
Also to mine, I think.”

“Also to mine, I think”! The phrase was conservative, and characteristic. For a moment he forgot that it had applied originally only to a runaway trunk. As he came upon it suddenly in the quiet of the empty house, it seemed more like a souvenir of married life as viewed across the years, nothing so very staid or settled, nothing too fixed or final about it, even after all this time. Thoughtfully he put the rest of the collection back into the care of the china hen, but, as he went downstairs and

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locked his trunk, he was still persistently reviewing his wife's part in the varied interests of thirty changeful years of married life. An affair, tentatively speaking, of keeping the keys.

One afternoon at the end of last summer's vacation, Phineas and I went on an unusual errand to a lonely spot far down on Cape Cod. A genealogy-loving relative had asked us to copy for her the inscriptions on some ancestral grave-stones in one of the oldest deserted burying grounds on the Cape. We found the place just before twilight, and we prowled about among the slanting gray stones of more than two hundred years, until we found the plot near the slope of the dune where all the family names were ours. Then we took out our

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pencils and began to copy as well as we could with the leaves of our notebooks fluttering in the rising gale. This wind-swept burying-ground, under the scudding clouds, with bayberry bushes for a hedge around it and wild cranberries for a carpet on its graves, was not a dreary spot, with all its whaling-captains and skippers buried here, and now and then a record of some one "loft at sea."

We began at the oldest stones, with their strange adornment of skull and wings. Copying busily, I had almost forgotten that these names were ever personalities at all, until I came to the crumbling headstone of one early settler, "aged 79, and Rosamond his wife." Rosamond, wife of Giles: Chaucerian names on Cape Cod. I glanced across at Phineas, who was making a pencil-

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impression of the skull and wings on another stone by holding a sheet of paper over it and rubbing lightly with the pencil-point until the design came out in black and white on the paper, perfectly revealed. I knew that he was bent on taking home convincing evidence that these old designs were not the usual cherub heads and wings, but unmistakably winged skulls. Here were we, absorbed in the quaintness of the headstones. And there were Rosamond and Giles, a young man and woman once upon a time, a very old man and woman when they died — ancestors now. There was not a great deal that we could conjecture about them and about their married days, whose uncharted territory had broadened now into infinite mystery indeed.

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A narrow footpath led down along the slope, through the bayberry hedge to the white Cape road. We made our way in that direction later in the evening toward the lighthouse on the edge of the coastwise cliffs, to watch for the Baltimore boat to go past. The chilly autumn darkness had fallen when we reached the headlands, and we knew that we should see only the lights of the boat. But we also knew that Geoffrey and his wife would be on board, going home from their vacation, and we had promised to say one more farewell to them at long distance as they went by. The wind was up and the clouds were over the stars, and the surf was pounding heavily under the high cliffs. Cautiously we worked our way down the concave steepness of the cliff in the in-

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tervals of calm between the sweeping gusts of ocean wind. It was a crazy adventure, but the sound of the endless surf on the wild beach was worth it, as we stood together on the sand with no light in all that surging darkness except the revolving gleam of the great lens on the lighthouse tower above us, its four beams of light turning weirdly like the slender fans of some huge windmill in the sky.

The boat was late. But presently we saw the tiny star-like glimmer that we knew must be the forward light, and another at a constant interval behind it that must be the aft-light on the boat. We watched them as they moved steadily along the hidden horizon, headed for Baltimore. That was all that we could see of Geoffrey and Priscilla, and the



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thought that they were actually there seemed almost as unreal and dream-like as the imagined presences that I had been thinking of that afternoon. But we waved them our good-bye, and Phineas raised his hat as they went out of sight.

It is little enough that we can be sure we see of any married life — its general direction and its masthead lights, and the swiftness of its progress in point of time. Acquaintanceship, even with ourselves, is an approximate, changeable affair. Our constant intimacy with uncertainty and change is what makes us treasure every fleeting glimpse into the lives of the friendly groups and couples we have known.

One after another we meet them, and we give them our love, and then we say

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good-bye, and on we all go again: and the circles shift and change. Groups may pledge eternal fealty — a fraternity, for example, or a spontaneous comradeship of devoted friends. But in the natural order of things, groups disperse, alliances disband, families of children scatter to the ends of the earth. The couple alone may normally remain. Mysterious and various as it is, the couple is the only recognized permanent combination in our impermanent lives. Whatever type they represent, a pair of congenial spirits can become a sort of central headquarters for many, as the years go on. Their children, though scattered, have a destination for return. Newcomers and old friends find a natural meeting-place in the circle around their hearth. They are in a position to

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keep equally in touch with the older and the younger generation adjoining theirs. They may be a link between the very young and the very old, between the lonely and the companionable, between the wanderer and home. This is one of the reasons why the normal continuity of married life is a very good thing indeed — not only for the couple, but for groups.

THE END





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